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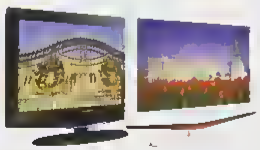
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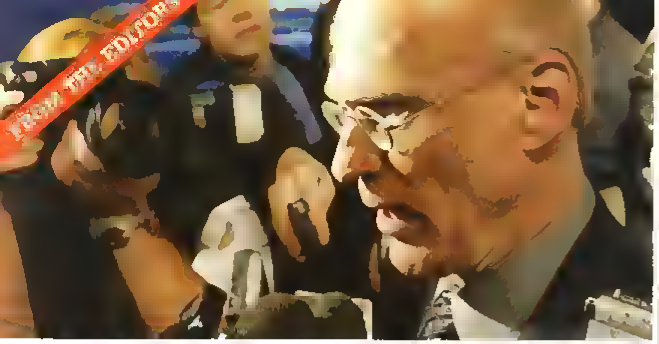
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THE FORMER OILMAN faced a hostile reception from opposition MPs in Ottawa last week

The real Gwyn Morgan

Ask anyone who's ever dealt with Gwyn Morgan on a professional level and they'll tell you the former CEO of EnCana is intelligent, articulate and honest. That's how he built Canada's largest energy company, and it's why a survey of 250 top executives named him Canada's most respected CEO in 2005.

But that's not the impression many Canadians now hold. Thanks to a spiteful and partisan attack by a handful of opposition members of Parliament, Morgan has been tarred as a racist, unfit for public service.

The facts say otherwise. Stephen Harper asked Morgan to lead the public appointments commission being set up to vet candidates for federal postings. Most Canadians saw this as an opportunity to replace the old system of patronage and secrecy with one based on merit and openness. Morgan accepted the Prime Minister's request, and agreed to a stipend of $1 a year.

But to Harper's opponents, this was a chance to settle ancient political scores. A week before the confirmation hearing, rookie NDP MP Peggy Nash tabled a motion rejecting Morgan before she had even met him. With the sword of Damocles hanging over his head, Morgan never had a chance.

Opposition members, led by Nash, seized on a speech he gave last December to the Fraser Institute, in which he argued that government should do more to weed out potentially violent and dangerous immigrants. By quoting selectively and out of context, reasonable comments were distorted to seem like an attack on minorities. The most commonly cited quote was this: "The vast majority of violent, lawless immigrants come from countries where the culture is dominated by violence and lawlessness." But most didn't report what came next: "Jamaica has one of the world's highest crime rates driven mainly by the violence between gangs competing for dominance in the Caribbean drug trade. Why do we expect different behaviour in Toronto, Ontario than in Kingston, Jamaica? Similarly, a portion of our Indo-Chinese immigrants have lived in situations where violence is necessary to survive. Again, the violent behaviour continues in Canada."

Morgan didn't suggest that any particular group should be barred from entry, only that authorities should be more aware of the potential for crime when people come to Canada from places marred by violence. Still, the committee rejected Morgan, 6-5, claiming he was "unqualified" for the job.

What would motivate such a smear? It's worth noting that much of Morgan's contentious speech was dedicated to criticizing labour unions, particularly in the auto sector, for contributing to the struggles of North American industry. Prior to being elected, Nash was a senior representative with the Canadian Auto Workers Union. It's also important to remember the Conservatives contributed to the poisoned atmosphere, rejecting Paul Martin's appointment of Glen Murray to the National Round Table on the Environment and Economy last spring, in a similarly partisan episode.

In other words, this was political payback for things that have little to do with Morgan and nothing to do with immigration.

It's a shame that the public appointments commission has been shelved, but we understand why government is unwilling to subject any more top candidates to a repeat of last week's farce. If this is what's become of Ottawa politics, Morgan is likely better off enjoying his well-earned retirement. It's the rest of us who should be outraged. M

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MAIL BAG

'By what right do you trash a competent woman who has risen to such career heights?'



WE DONE THEM WRONG

I DILIGENTLY KEPT up with Canada's first deployment to Afghanistan and had heard about the record kill-shot and the subsequent investigation into the corpse desecration. Nothing about what happened to those soldiers ("We were abandoned," Cover, May 15) surprises me. Canada has a long history of bringing down its heroes. Whether it was jealousy or blind adherence to the rules by the powers that be, the lives of those men will never be the same. Some sort of recompense should be given to them, whether an apology or something more substantial, and the government must finally acknowledge these men's accomplishments in the field. Otherwise how can the government expect the army to be willing to make the sacrifices expected of them, given their government could betray them regardless of their courage.
Terry Verticchio, Burlington, Ont.

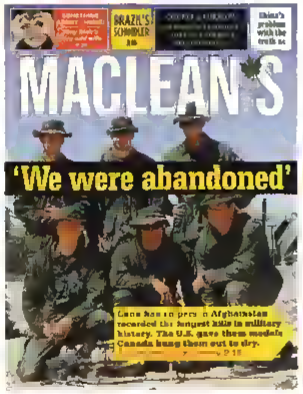
I DON'T SUBSCRIBE to *Maclean's* and haven't bought the magazine for five years. But I spotted the cover story and was curious to know what happened to the Canadian snipers. I heard they had logged some terrific results and sort of recalled the "finger" incident being in the news, but it was like the snipers suddenly left the theatre. It is hard to imagine the short-sighted and pitiful response of the armed forces brass in this situation. Was the reality of war too much for the brass to stomach? What caused them to act like cowards toward subordinates performing a task none of the brass could even qualify to do? I find that despicable.
Theode Kasper, Calgary

WHEN I READ of the horror and suffering brought on by war, I'm not surprised that Omar Bradley, a U.S. five-star general known as the "GI's general," said that "as far as I am concerned, war itself is immoral."
Stan Penner, Landmark, Man.

Why don't the snipers apply to the U.S. army to enlist?
Harold Vick, Fort Thomas, Ky.

ROB FURLONG is obviously a great marksman, and for that he should be acclaimed, but we have sunk to a new low if we believe that firing a bullet so that "it tore into the man's torso, ripping apart his insides"—"the longest recorded kill"—should be a source of pride for the Canadian army or anyone else. I wonder about writer Michael Friscolanti's mental health, if he believes maiming and killing other human beings is something to be proud of.
Rev. Glen Eagle, Ajax, Ont.

THIS STORY is typical of the Canadian military and government. I hope the men in this story are able to look themselves in the mirror every day knowing they did exactly as every soldier is expected to do: follow orders and be the best that you can be. I wish Canada's leaders had more backbone.
Sgt. Blaine Broderick (ret'd), Carleton Place, Ont.



THIS ARTICLE seems to be a new low for *Maclean's*. The blatant emphasis on the glory of killing a human being 2,430 m away—"a moment of pride for the Canadian army"—does a terrible disservice to professional Canadian soldiers as well as to Canada's reputation in how we participate in international conflicts. Please don't bother sending a renewal notice.
Bill and Nancy O'Brien, Burlington, Ont.

CHERIE BABY

AS I READ this diatribe ("There's something about Cherie," World, May 15), I was asking myself what was the point of publishing this drivel, who is Rosalind Miles, and what are her accomplishments compared to Cherie Blair's? By what right does the media trash a competent woman who has risen to such career heights? Would we ever see this personal an attack on a man? Is ambition in a woman an undesirable characteristic? I'm ashamed to say I read it!
Jean Ennis, Courtenay, B.C.

SURE, her out-of-control spending and her general poor judgment are fair game for an article, but the glee with which the author catalogued her failings was over the top. "Expanding hindquarters," "gargoyle grin," "thick legs"—like the new *Maclean's*, it's mostly pertinent and interesting, but save the cruel remarks for real villains like Kenneth Lay or Donald Rumsfeld.
Sheila Whitzman, Westmount, Que.

THOSE PESKY GUIDELINES

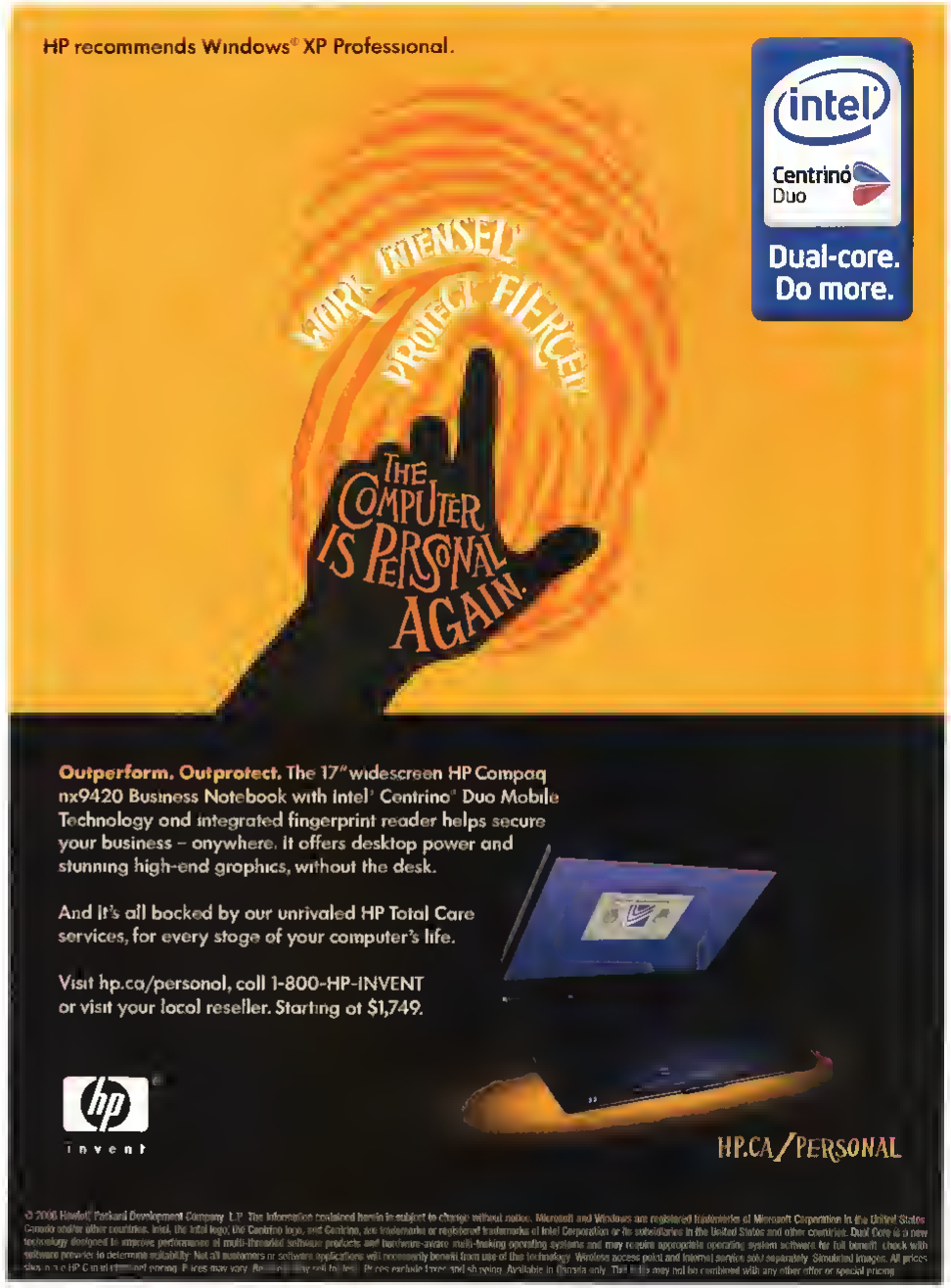
GIVEN THAT he was chairman of the finance committee that reviewed them, it was stunning to see Maurizio Bevilacqua claim that the federal government does not have guidelines for reviewing proposed bank mergers (Interview, May 15). In fact, anyone can read the guidelines on the Department of Finance web page at *http://www.fin.gc.ca/finserv/docs/finserv2e.html#Merger*
Duff Conacher, Coordinator, Democracy Watch, Ottawa

THE CRULLER DEBATE

MARK STEYN'S OBSESSION with attacking Michael Adams ("Shall we gather at the crullers?" May 8) confirms that he must fear Michael's credibility with corporate and other audiences across Canada. But we would prefer if Mr. Steyn does not use Michael's comments about Tim Hortons' success as a launch pad for his own pro-life ranting. In any comparison of social comment based on the "lamest premise," Mr. Steyn would win hands down.
Bruce MacLellan, President, Environics Communications Inc., Toronto

BUSH AND THE TWIN TOWERS

CONSPIRACY THEORIES are hatched by clever technocrats who understand that most members of our society cannot accept or understand a horrible tragedy ("Hijacking the truth on 9/11," Education, May 15). As much as we may despise the acts of that day, we must acknowledge that the U.S. was outwitted by a group whose convictions and beliefs are no less powerful than ours,



MAIL BAG

'How could Bush conspire to have the government blow up the towers? I doubt he could spell conspiracy, never mind mastermind one.'



Fleeing an al-Qaeda or American attack?

although less desirable in our eyes. Remember people who keep looking back tend to run into trouble, instead of avoiding it.
Jacob Kasperowicz, Kirkland, Que

WHAT A REMARKABLE coincidence that on page 41 there was a small item ("Write nonsense and win acceptance," May 15, Blackboard Jungle) about three pranksters who programmed their computer to produce nonsensical gobbledygook to confound some eggheads at a conference and, on the same page, *Maclean's* had an article dealing with self-declared intellectuals who suggested that 9/11 was a hoax. Surely the most ridiculous comment was by professor A.K. Dewdney of the University of Western Ontario, who supported such nonsense by claiming "we're not a bunch of yahoos—we're professional people." Oh, is that right? How professional was that fellow professor of yours at Western who, some years ago, claimed superiority of races in a bizarre pecking order depending on whether they were Oriental, Caucasian or Negroid? Besides, how in the world could President Bush conspire to have the U.S. government blow up the Twin Towers? I doubt he could spell conspiracy, never mind mastermind one.
Bruce Pendergast, Guelph, Ont.

TEARS, ANGST AND HBO

SOME COLUMNS in your magazine are so moving and so tragic that they cry out for comment. The "Bad News" (7 Days, May 15) is one such example. Tears welled in my eyes as I read of the plight of your poor, deprived writer desperately seeking HBO enlightenment and then being forced to mine the depths of the *L.A. Times* to unearth the nugget that Barry Bonds is not held in high esteem by his godfather, Willie Mays. May I offer a suggestion to assuage the suffering of this poor soul? A one way ticket to LAX, a lifetime subscription to the *L.A. Times*, a direct satellite hookup to HBO and a new job with *People*. There, now we're all happy.
David Lvricker, Atikokan, Ont.

MUCH ADO ABOUT CLINTON

WHY SHOULD I CARE, at this juncture, if Hillary Rodham Clinton ("Tougher than Bush?", World, May 8) is going to run in the American presidential race in 2008? Last time I checked, it is still the first half of 2006, and we have a neo-conservative prime minister acting like he is a centrist. News flash: Canadians are a lot more interested in what damage Harper is going to do in 2006 than learning about how Clinton is terrifying your conservative buddies in the States.
David Woods, Sydney, Australia.

SCIENTOLOGY PRIMER

I READ Scott Feschuk's open letter to Tom Cruise's new baby in which he says "your Dad has for a long time been something called a Scientologist" ("Daddy loves you like crazy," Comment, May 1). I have been a Scientologist for 22 years. As far as I know, Scientology does not have "something to do with aliens." It is a codified body of knowledge available to anyone, with information that betters conditions. I am an ordained minister of the Church of Scientology. When my father was lying in a hospital bed, dying from pneumonia, I gave him a continual Scientology process called a Body Communication Assist. He passed away in peace with me there. No medical personnel interfered with us. I abhor Feschuk's satire of Cruise and his family. Perhaps he should actually read a book written by L. Ron Hubbard.
Katherine Jaconello, Toronto

CLARIFICATION

AN ARTICLE in the May 22 edition, "Best of Friends," may have left the impression that Brian Mulroney offered a formal deal on the Constitution in 1984 to secure the support of René Lévesque and the Parti Québécois. This was not the case. Mr. Mulroney promised to bring Quebec back into the constitutional fold with "honour and enthusiasm," but no formal offer was made.

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Maclean's ISSN 0024-8262. Full subscription prices for one year, including taxes: $60.65 (GST/HST) $65.18 (HST/QST) U.S.A., $99.00 surface. Elsewhere countries, $228.06 airmail.

CANADIAN POSTMASTER:
Undeliverable copies and change of address notices to: Maclean's, P.O. Box 960, Station Main, Markham, Ont. L3P 0H8.

Publications Mail Agreement No. 40078233. Registration No. 08973.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Publications Assistance Program (PAP) and the Canada Magazine Fund toward our mailing and editorial costs.

U.S. POSTMASTER: Periodicals postage paid at Niagara Falls, NY. USPS 106710. Office: 2434 Niagara Falls Blvd., Niagara Falls, NY 14304-1068. Send address changes (form 3579) to: Maclean's, P.O. Box 4541, Buffalo, NY 14240.

Printed in Canada by Quebecor World Inc.

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OPINION

Liberal love-in? The race is more like tantric sex.



PETER C. NEWMAN

Watching the near dozen Liberal leadership candidates debate Canada's—and their—future recently at Toronto's Sheraton Centre, I experienced twin epiphanies. The first was that these partisan warhorses seemed unaware of the occasion's potential long-term consequences: that not fielding exactly the right candidate at their convention this December could bring about the permanent destruction of the Liberal party, which each of the contenders was earnestly pledging to perpetuate. The second revelation was that as far as I could observe, this hardly qualified as a political event. The mood was set by Bob Rae's declaration. "You won't hear a negative peep from me, about them," referring to his stablemates. Listening to the innocuous, self-congratulatory speeches, it occurred to me that the cloying camaraderie of the participants bordered on tantric sex.

It's a form of lovemaking that channels rather than dissipates orgasmic energies, transforming sexuality from the plane of doing to a place of being. It may be stretching my metaphor, but there certainly was much more being than doing during this first debate, representative of the regional powwows due to take place across the country in the next six months. Most of the candidates said nothing, and with skin-deep sincerity, except for Ken Dryden, who looked and sounded as if he was actually having a tantric moment and could barely read his text.

It was a dismal debut of the Natural Governing Party contenders' run for the short straw.

Perhaps these wobbly worthies were mesmerized by Prime Minister Stephen Harper's new-wave one-man government, having summered up within the Liberal tradition of one-party government, which is not quite the same thing. Their fundamental shortcoming was that they gave the impression of tilting at political windmills with little passion and less imagination. What they forgot was that Don Quixote, who perfected that art form, fought coldly and alertly against his imagined enemies, utilizing the proper thrusts that experienced lancers use in their fiercest attack mode. The Liberals' thrusts were more of the wet noodle variety. The most telling aspect of their presentations was how hard they pretended that there were no piranhas nibbling at their nerve ends (namely, the other contenders on the platform), but that they were jolly companions in some Golden Age Recreational Society, enjoying a Saturday night outing.

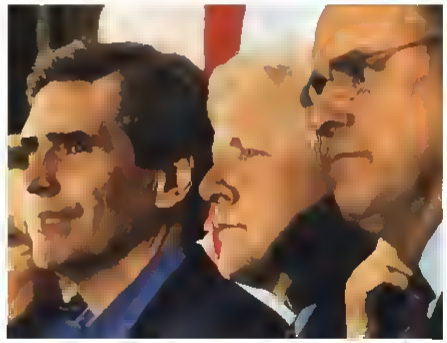
I was stuck with comparing their culinary offerings to the 1,400 Liberal delegates in attendance. Michael Ignatieff's hospitality suite featured duck crepes and sushi, while his chief rival, Bob Rae, was dishing out trail mix—telling choices. Ken Dryden offered thare-tenstically dry martinis, the most popular raffle prize of the evening was dinner with Belinda Stronach.

Gerard Kennedy was billed as the furthest out outsider, although he has been a Liberal since he was seven, when he carried the local candidate's briefcase during an election campaign in The Pas, Man., where he was born. Kennedy gave a perfectly reasoned attack on Mike Harris, a previous Ontario Tory leader, which was hardly the issue. There was nothing in his presentation of the left-wing firebrand who frightened the delegates at the 1996 Ontario Liberal convention into choosing Dalton McGuinty as their leader.

Stéphane Dion delivered a motherhood statement on the environment but sounded as stilted as if he was reading the operating instructions from some complicated Japanese electronic toy manual. (Batteries not included.) Hedy Fry's political torch burned about as brightly as those blazing crosses (a la Ku Klux Klan) that she falsely claimed had lit up Prince George. Scott Brison was persuasive, his time will come.

Only one candidate stood apart. That exception was Michael Ignatieff, whose speech dealt almost entirely with awakening dreams of Canada's shining future. He alone appeared prime ministerial. He was a man on fire as he described his plans for a new and creative Canada that would rise above the political bickering. Trying to assess his impact, I realized that his oratorical skills were honed not on the political stump (like those of all the others on the platform), but in the classrooms of King's College, Cambridge and Harvard, where much more demanding venues. At universities words have meaning, they are assayed for their content, and quickly dismissed if they don't measure up. His did.

Still, the campaigning Liberals reminded me of the droopy remains of a once mighty army whose banners had become ragged, its generals disillusioned, and its causes no longer relevant. Unaccustomed to being in opposition, the formerly powerful Liberal power barons have been reduced to a gathering of political taxidermists measuring one another for size. At the moment, they seem to have little comprehension that their once unassailable political movement, like the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, could vanish unless they latch on to something (and someone) more soul-stirring than attacking Stephen Harper for having been born. It is the measure of passion, commitment and integrity that their new leader brings to the political wars by which they will be judged—not the bloodless audit of their opponent's alleged follies they offered this night.



GETTY IMAGES

J.P. MOCZULSKI/REUTERS

At least Don Quixote attacked with passion. Liberals tilted at windmills with wet noodles.

What they ought to be seeking is not merely a return to the comforts of power but a populist mandate. That can be a revolutionary instrument, not only because of the authority it confers on elected politicians, but because it empowers original thought and action. The tantric ideal is to awaken psychic energies through which its adepts enter into higher states of consciousness. Eliminate the sexual aspects of that transaction, and you have the perfect formula for reviving the Liberal party. M

Harper for president? It's not that bad—it's worse



ANDREW POTTER

Stephen Harper just can't shake that hidden agenda. Back when he was a scary Reformer, the big worry was that he was a closet Alberta separatist pining for the return of back-alley abortions. Now that he's Prime Minister, the accusations are a touch more polite: apparently, Harper wants nothing more than to be President of Canada.

In the *Toronto Star* last month, York University historian Arthur Haberman explained that "Harper takes the U.S. presidency as his model, where the president is both head of government and head of state, and has a power and deference unknown and inappropriate to parliamentary governments." As evidence, Haberman entered exhibits such as Harper's rigid control over government communications, his habit of ending speeches with "God bless Canada," and the use of the Speech from the Throne as a media event, with soldiers and other special guests.

In fairness, the Speech from the Throne business was pretty crass as far as pandering to core constituencies goes. But when it comes to worries about the presidentializing of Canadian politics, this is mild stuff. It is worth remembering that Brian Mulroney was widely derided for his presidential bearing, while Jean Chrétien was such a notorious autocrat that columnists described him as the "imperial prime minister." Constitutionally, there is nothing more American in our politics than Pierre Trudeau's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, from its preamble affirming the supremacy of God to its radical attenuation of the supremacy of Parliament.

Yes, Harper is clearly a control freak when it comes to communications. But the expectation that the PM will have regular media events, press conferences and so forth is itself an Americanization of our politics. Under our system, the PM is not accountable directly to the people via the media; he is accountable to our elected representatives in Parliament. So far, Harper has not shown any great unwillingness to face Parliament, and until he does, there is no great constitutional worry. Recall, too, that this is the same Harper who during the election campaign parried Paul Martin's lunatic proposal to remove the notwithstanding clause from the Constitution by pointing out that the clause gave Canada a useful balance between British parliamentarism and American judicialism.

There is an aspect of Harper's style that is far more threatening: his intense partisanship, an approach Andrew Coyne of the *National Post* describes as "tribal." For Harper, politics is about helping your friends and harming your enemies—a blood sport in which no quarter is asked, and none offered. There's an American connection here: politics in the land to our south is now thoroughly Manichaean, with the republic split into two opposing political tribes whose mutual loathing plays itself out in an obscenely partisan media.



For Harper, politics is about helping your friends and harming your enemies. It's tribal.

Tribalism, unfortunately, tends to militate against any sort of principled politics. Policies, programs and even institutions are supported or opposed not because they are good or bad for the country, but because they are opposed or supported by the other side. To see this at work, we just have to scroll down the list of core conservative principles Stephen Harper espoused before he became PM: electoral reform, Senate reform, the end of MPs' "gold-plated" pensions, respect for an independent ethics commissioner, efficient taxation, small government, provincial rights ... the list is as long as it is ideologically pure. There was a lot for a young Canadian conservative to complain about in the 1990s.

Now that he is Prime Minister, these have all been chucked. Not just postponed or backburnered, but unceremoniously jettisoned, their exact opposites embraced with obvious delight. The apologists say, well, it's a minority government. Politics is the art of the possible. Pragmatism is a good thing.

This won't wash. Given the glee with which Harper has abandoned these principles, it is pretty clear that what once made them so appealing to him was simply that Liberals didn't endorse them. In 1997, Harper co-wrote (with Tom Flanagan) an article called "Our Benign Dictatorship," condemning the deep institutional flaws that permitted Liberal hegemony. The conclusion of that piece was: "Modernizing Canadian politics would not only be good for conservatism, it might be the key to Canada's survival as a nation."

Now that conservatism is doing just fine under the old system, the nation's survival doesn't seem so pressing. In Harper's few short months as PM, this has become a familiar pattern: he's happy to pander to special interest groups, as long as they are his special interest groups. He is not opposed to wasteful government redistribution of income, as long as he's the one doing the redistributing. An inefficient and messy tax code is no big deal, as long as it is his mess. An appointed Senate is fine when it is a Conservative Prime Minister doing the appointing. And so on.

The Conservatives are in power, but the danger is not that we have elected someone who wants to be George W. Bush. It is that we have elected someone who has no problem with a benign dictatorship, as long as he's the dictator, for whom principle and politics are like church and state, if not oil and water. We have re-elected Jean Chretien. M



7 DAYS THE WEEK OF 5/15

STORY OF THE WEEK — OUR FALLEN DAUGHTER

Last Wednesday, 26-year-old Capt. Nichola Goddard of Calgary was killed in a firefight with Taliban insurgents near Kandahar. She was Canada's first female combat soldier to be killed in action. The government confirmed on Friday that Goddard's husband, Jason Beam, would receive Canada's Memorial Cross, originally created to honour the sacrifices of wives and mothers. Canada has announced it will extend its commitment to Afghanistan until 2009.

Good news

Action, not delusion

For Canadians who believe reality rather than sentiment should guide political decisions, last week was an encouraging one. First, Environment Minister Rona Ambrose had the courage to admit the obvious: this country has no hope of meeting its objectives under the Kyoto Protocol. The previous Liberal government committed us to cutting greenhouse gas emissions to six per cent below 1990 levels by 2012. Instead, our greenhouse gas emissions have risen by around 30 per cent since 1990, due mainly to our substantial economic growth. The government is now looking for a more effective and realistic strategy to tackle global warming. Next, one day after auditor general Sheila Fraser revealed yet more hidden federal gun registry costs, the Conservative government announced a $10-million cut to the registry budget, an amnesty for long-gun owners, and a shift in responsibility to the RCMP. Kyoto and the gun registry are plagued by the same problem: both satisfy public demand for action at enormous expense, yet both are failing utterly to address their stated goals—keeping guns out of the wrong hands and lowering carbon emissions.

He's your man

After a trying couple of years, things are finally looking up for Leonard Cohen. The poet, now 71, recently won a US$9.5-million lawsuit against Kelley Lynch, his long-time manager, after claiming she stole millions from his savings, leaving him virtually broke. Last week, *Book of Longing*, his first book in 22 years, shot to No. 1 on Indigo's Canadian bestsellers' list. Indigo president Heather Reisman told the CBC it was the first time a book of poetry had hit that position. Adding to this grand show of support was Prince Charles, who paid Cohen a lavish compliment in a recent British TV interview. He's a 'wonderful" chap, said the Prince. "He has this incredibly, sort of laid back, gravelly voice. It's terrific stuff."

Paying their own way

For those who insist corporate welfare and pricey public incentives are essential to save Canada's manufacturing industry, we point out last week's decision by Honda to build a new engine plant northwest of Toronto. The $154-million project will employ 340 people when complete. Best of all, Ontario is only paying up to 10 per cent of the infrastructure costs of preparing the site. The direct costs of the expansion are all being borne by the company. Add that to last week's billion-dollar expansion by auto parts maker Linamar, in which less than five per cent of the cost is being born by the taxpayer, and it seems the trend toward ever larger public incentives for manufacturers is on the wane.

Bad news

It's getting very quiet up here

The strong loonie is sending hordes of Canadian shoppers across the border to U.S. malls, according to Statistics Canada, but the number of Americans making same-day shopping trips to Canada continues to hover at an all-time low. In March, Canadians made a total of 3.3 million same-day trips to the U.S., while Americans made only 1.2 million quick trips north. Should the U.S. press forward with plans to further restrict border security—requiring all travellers to present a passport—things will only get worse for retailers in Canada.

Turmoil in the deeps

Ranging from the bizarre to the heartbreaking, it was a bad week for the B.C. mining industry. First, tiny Brookmount Explorations announced its chief financial officer, Jay Jeffery Shapiro, was not who he claimed to be. The company reportedly learned its CFO had faked his identity when the real Shapiro contacted them and said someone was falsely using his name. Then, shares of Vancouver-based Ivanhoe Mines plunged after reports that the company may be subject to an onerous windfall tax on profits from its proposed mine in Mongolia. But real tragedy struck on Wednesday, when the bodies of four people, apparently overcome by hydrogen sulphide fumes, were found at a decommissioned mine owned by Teck Cominco in Kimberley, B.C. The incident claimed the lives of two workers and two paramedics who attempted to save them.

FACE OF THE WEEK



GERALD HERBERT/AP

IT'S A STUMPER! Gen. Michael Hayden, President Bush's CIA director nominee, during his confirmation hearing on Capitol Hill

Like a Yugo, but not as nice

U.S. market researchers are predicting the number of drivers in India will increase by roughly nine per cent annually over the next five years, thanks to rapid economic growth and rising incomes. Seeking to make cars even more accessible, Indian-based Tata Motors has announced it will produce a five-seat family vehicle priced at $2,400, less than half the price of its competitors' cheapest models. Asked how his company would pull it off, CEO Ratan Tata told reporters he would use less steel, more plastic, and adhesives in the place of welding. We shudder to think what the air bags will be made of.

Still no HBO

On Thursday evening, the network will premiere *Favela Rising*, a documentary film about a reformed Brazilian drug trafficker who uses music and dance to help break the cycle of systemic violence and police corruption in his community in the slums of Rio de Janeiro. To date, *Favela Rising* has won 25 international and national film festival honours. Critics have raved about it. But in Canada, where HBO is still not licensed, we'll have to take their word for it. M

TOM HANSON/CP



7 DAYS

A WEEK IN THE LIFE OF JOHN HOWARD

The Australian prime minister arrived at a private dinner at 24 Sussex Drive, welcomed by the Harper children who'd scrawled greetings in pink chalk on the driveway. It was a personal welcome for a man whose electoral successes acted as tutorials for Stephen Harper's recent campaign. Howard had a few other lessons to impart: that Washington is a force of good for the world, that terrorism must be confronted head-on, and that the lack of Canadian interest in cricket is weird.

DISCOVERY

Suitable for life

Astronomers have found three planets orbiting the distant sun HD69830 that theoretically could sustain life. The outermost of the three planets is located at a distance from its sun where temperatures are moderate enough to permit water to remain liquid. It has a solid core of rock and ice and is shrouded in gas. However, because the planet is the size of our solar system's Neptune and thus many times larger than the earth, any possible life there would have to contend with heavy gravity. The system is 41 light years from the earth.

The big root

The lowly but vital cassava plant has been supersized. The starchy tuber is a staple for 600 million people in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Reporting in *Plant Biotechnology Journal*, Richard Sayre of Ohio State University says that genetically modified versions of cassava created by researchers have resulted in a root that is 2.5 times larger than conventional cassavas. The issue now is getting the modified plants to farmers in the developing world at nominal or no charge.

The final gene

The last part of the puzzle, Chromosome 1, has been sequenced, bringing to an end the 16-year Human Genome Project, which decoded the entire human genetic code. Chromosome 1 carries 3,141 genes, including those linked to ailments such as cancer and Alzheimer's disease.



CASSAVA PLANTS. The prosaic bur viral tuber just got supersized

Death to superbugs

So-called superbugs are about to get a smackdown from a new superhero: antibiotics derived from ordinary soil bacteria. *Streptomyces platensis*, a benign soil bacterium found in Africa, has been used to create Platensimycin, which can stop lethal superbugs found in hospitals, such as methicillin-resistant MRSA. It does so by interfering with superbugs' ability to make vital fatty acids.

WILD KINGDOM

Bear vs. monkey

Animals are often grouped together in common habitats at zoos and they live peacefully side by side. But last week, something went terribly awry in the Netherlands, when several sloth bears drove a panicked Barbary macaque into an electric fence, stunning it. One of the bears then killed the monkey within sight of horrified spectators. A statement from the Beekse Bergen Safari Park declared, "Habitats here in the safari park are arranged in such a way that one animal almost never kills another, but they are and remain wild animals." The macaques will be relocated to another part of the park.

Small census

They are among the smallest animals on earth, but in their position as the foundation for both the marine food chain and what is known as the carbon cycle, zooplankton are of crucial importance. Only now are these little understood creatures being comprehensively catalogued. As part of the International Census of Marine Life, collections are being made of the diverse category. A recent deep-sea trolling in the Atlantic's Sargasso Sea revealed 500 species, including tiny swimming worms, microscopic shrimp-like creatures and micro-jellyfish. Besides acting as food for higher forms of animals, zooplankton are vital in a process that sees carbon dioxide, dissolved from the atmosphere in sea water, deposited deep in the ocean floor where it can reside, stable, for millennia.

Distinct blues

An important new colony of blue whales, the biggest animals ever to have lived, has been discovered off the coast of Chile. The colony of 65 blue whales may inhabit the largest single feeding and breeding ground in the southern hemisphere for the nearly extinct titans. Scientists are anxious to learn more about the habitat because blue whale numbers remain very low after a century of hunting. Estimates of the number of blue whales in the southern hemisphere range from 400 to 1,400.

MORTALITY

Wine for your ear

It's been touted as being good for the heart and a boost to the immune system. Now science says that red wine may delay age-related deafness. Sensitive hairs in the inner ear responsible for hearing acuity become damaged over the years by oxygen free radicals, produced by cellular activity. Resveratrol, which gives red wine antioxidant properties, neutralizes free radicals, protecting the ear. Scientists say that Aspirin or green tea can have similar effects because they also contain resveratrol.

Preemie caffeine

Can caffeine boost premature babies' ability to breathe? University of Toronto researchers gave caffeine to half of 2,000 premature babies in a study. They found that half the babies who didn't receive caffeine had a risk of lung-tissue scarring, stemming from the pressure of air on their lungs from mechanical ventilators. Among the infants given caffeine, only a third were found at risk. That was because, researchers believe, the caffeinated kids could be taken off mechanical ventilators sooner.

Planes and clots

Air passengers concerned about getting blood clots from sitting in cramped seats on long haul flights can take ambivalent comfort from new findings that show it's the sitting, not the flying at high altitude, that causes deep-vein thrombosis (DVT). Researchers at the University of Leicester in Britain have found that so-called "economy-class syndrome" can happen wherever movement is restricted by a lack of leg room, such as in the back seats of automobiles or on trains. Tests in rooms simulating airliner cabin pressure and reduced oxygen found no increase in DVT.

THE WEEK AHEAD... CREDIT CARDS AND MISSILES

Condoleezza Rice has expressed support for a bill to be voted on in a U.S. Senate committee this week that would help curb the spread of shoulder-fired missiles around the world. The U.S. State Department estimates thousands of the weapons are in the hands of "non-state actors," such as terrorists. Meanwhile, MasterCard will fire off an initial public offering on the New York Stock Exchange, hoping to raise US$2.6 billion for the credit card association.



KIDS TODAY

Snack dealers

Just at a time when schools are trying to wean kids off junk food by banning it from cafeterias and vending machines, a surprising schoolyard black market is springing up in Britain. Underage entrepreneurs bring chips, chocolate bars and soft drinks to sell to other pupils. The undercover vendors buy the junk food in bulk and then hawk it in the style of hovering drug dealers. And the young peddlers have even shown competitive smarts by undercutting the prices of snacks sold in convenience stores.

TV illness

More than 300 schoolchildren in Portugal have come down with Strawberries with Sugar virus, reporting to doctors with rashes, difficulty breathing and dizziness. The trouble became so widespread that a few schools briefly closed. The root of the "illness" is a soap opera for teens that airs on Portuguese television called *Strawberries with Sugar*. Recently the characters on the series came down with a disease, and doctors say young viewers have interpreted their own allergies or wheeziness as the fictitious disease. They also noted that the outbreak coincided with term-end exams.



MARY WOHLFORD'S CHEST. In case the living will is misplaced

FROM LEFT: JACOB SILBERBERG/GETTY IMAGES; MARY CHIND/THE DES MOINES REGISTER/AP; CP

POLL WATCH

Printer crimes

Office printers make Canadians feel a little guilty. A recent poll by Ipsos-Reid found that 28 per cent of respondents snoop through material left on the printer, while 67 per cent admit to using the printer for personal business. 39 per cent print driving instructions, 34 per cent resumés and 18 per cent photos. When a printer malfunctions, three-quarters of respondents claim they try to fix the problem themselves, while only six per cent contact the IT department. Three per cent simply leave the area quietly.

Crime of the heart

In Taiwan, where adultery is punishable with up to a year in prison, a whopping 89 per cent of respondents to a survey believe that philandering should remain a crime. Despite the draconian sentencing, few Taiwanese convicted of adultery actually do time. Most are allowed to pay US$28 for each day they've been sentenced.

Fat extremes

Nearly half of respondents to an online survey said they'd sacrifice a year of their lives to avoid being fat. The survey, conducted by the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity at Yale University, also reported that 4,000 respondents would end their marriages, give up the possibility of having children, even succumb to alcoholism rather than be fat. Five per cent said they'd rather lose a limb than be fat, and four per cent preferred blindness to being obese.

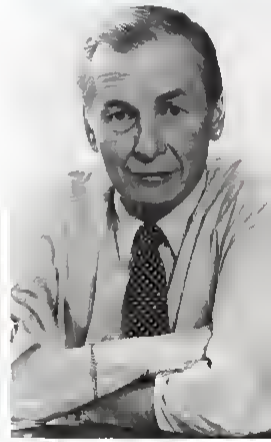
IN OTHER NEWS

Clear instructions

To ensure there is no confusion about her wishes when the time comes, former nurse Mary Wohlford, 80, recently had the words "Do not resuscitate" tattooed on her sternum. Wohlford, of Dyersville, Iowa, got inked after last year's Terri Schiavo controversy. She worried that family members might misplace her living will. She says that at first, employees at Gary's Professional Tattooing Studio refused to do the job, unsure if it was ethical. She eventually convinced the owner and even negotiated a senior's discount.

IN PASSING

Marion Andre, 86, theatre director. The Polish-born founding artist at Montreal's Saidye Bronfman Centre and Toronto's Theatre Plus brought experience in Polish underground theatre to Canada, pioneering provocative and controversial political modern theatre productions.



BAIN. Formed toxic opinions of Pierre Trudeau

George Bain, 86, newspaper columnist and educator. As the *Globe and Mail*'s first Ottawa-based columnist, he formulated toxic opinions about the Liberal government of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau to the point that he once stormed out of an interview with Trudeau—in the middle of a prime ministerial limousine ride. M

CAPITAL DIARY

DR. RUBY, STICKING OUT LIKE A SORE FOOT, AND A CAMERA HOG. OTTAWA OUTTAKES BY MITCHEL RAPHAEL



DHALLA shows how to stretch

IS THERE A CHIROPRACTOR IN THE HOUSE?

When some feds get a pain in the neck they turn to Liberal MP **Ruby Dhalla**, a 32-year-old chiropractor and one of the youngest women ever elected to Parliament. "People have a lot of neck pain and headaches here," she says. Maybe it's those green chairs in the House of Commons? "It would be nice if the House moved to a more ergonomically friendly environment," says Dhalla. The southern Ontario MP, who is non-partisan about demonstrating arm and neck stretches to her colleagues, wants to "bring the concept of wellness, prevention and being proactive about your health to Parliament Hill. We need to have an on-site health care facility which provides chiropractic services, physio, massage therapy, acupuncture, yoga." Dhalla, who takes daily doses of fish oil, flaxseed and vitamins and trades fitness tips with Liberal workout addict **Scott Brison**, had to lobby to get healthy choices at Parliament Hill snack stations. "We actually got apples, oranges," she says. But don't expect to see steamed kale anytime soon. Even the "healthy" choices in the parliamentary restaurant seem kind of dubious. Where's the food audit, **Sheila Fraser**?

MYRON THOMPSON ON A YOGA MAT?

Even Dhalla's best efforts won't get Alberta MP **Myron Thompson** hitting the yoga mat. Last week, on the day the Conservatives celebrated their 100th day in power, the Hill's favourite cowboy was wearing an air cast on his right foot. He broke his ankle five years ago and now suffers from arthritis. The new cast is finally providing some relief. "You can replace knees and hips, but you can't replace the ankle," says the Albertan. The air cast is, sadly, a dull grey colour. Thompson has no intention of getting a darker one to match his suits or working around his new medical accessory the way **Madonna** and **Michael Jackson** did when they had arm braces. "You think I'm going to go out and buy a new wardrobe for this?" Thompson adds he would stop any Hill yoga service right in its tracks. "When you need that kind of service you don't need to have it on the Hill." Thompson told me he will have to wear the air cast "probably the rest of my life," and then headed outside for a smoke.

SAME-PARTY LOVERS

Edmonton Tory MP and Hill hipster **Rahim Jaffer** has been dating **Helena Guergis**, who represents Ontario's Simcoe-Grey riding, for a few months. "When I arrived here in 1997 I never imagined I would date any of my colleagues," says Jaffer. "We had **Deborah Grey**, **Sheila Copps**. These weren't women who were eligible—nor were they really my type." Jaffer and Guergis bonded on the standing committee on citizenship and immigration. They then travelled together throughout eastern Canada for hearings on the Canadian Citizenship Act. After that they hit Montreal. Jaffer had friends at all their stops and kept inviting Guergis out at night to party. The same-party lovers have even met each other's parents. Jaffer was recently voted second-sexiest and second best-dressed male MP by the *Hill Times*. Guergis came in second in the same categories for female MPs. Jaffer says his fashion secret is hot shirt-and-tie combos, though he never spends more than $40 on a tie. This ain't no billionaire couple, but the kids will be stunning.





MET THE PARENTS! MPs Jaffer and Guergis



A BETTER door than a window

CAN YOU SEE ME NOW, MOM?

Some of **Stephen Harper**'s Conservative parliamentarians are upset about his shift to the left. And they are literally his closest MPs. The PM has a tendency to rise in the House and do a 90-degree left turn to face the Speaker directly. That means the MPs behind him are out of the TV camera shots. They are grumbling that he should turn more to the right. Oh please, it's mostly just CPAC. Maybe those Tories worried about their media deficiency should run for the next *Canadian Idol*—better ratings than the parliamentary channel and the kids will love you! Call **Ben Mulroney**.

Mitchel Raphael can be contacted at mitchelraphael@attglobal.net

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT MITCHEL RAPHAEL. MITCHEL RAPHAEL. CP. MITCHEL RAPHAEL. CP



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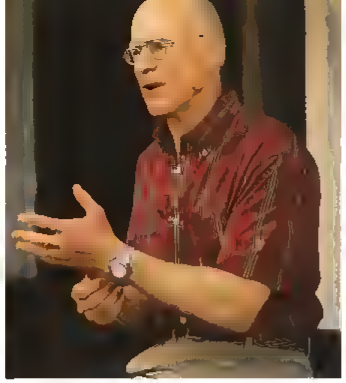
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'Source: *Time Magazine* February 6, 2006, page 66 "Six Winning Western DVDs" by Richard Corliss.

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INTERVIEW







'It's wilful blindness. I was talking about trying to help people overcome problems, rather than gloss over them'

GWYN MORGAN TALKS TO LINDA FRUM ABOUT RACE, REVENGE, PARTISAN ATTACKS ON CHARACTER AND WHY HE'D RATHER BE MAKING $1 A YEAR

On May 16, Prime Minister Stephen Harper's candidate for chairman of the public appointments commission, recently retired oilman Gwyn Morgan, was rejected in a 6-5 vote of the Commons government operations committee. All opposition members of the committee voted against him. During the committee session, Morgan was branded as a racist because of remarks made in a speech to the Fraser Institute in 2005 in which he suggested that politicians needed to make the link between Canada's crime rates and its immigration policies, if the country's crime problem was to be addressed. NDP committee member Peggy Nash, who represents the Toronto riding of Parkdale-High Park, declared Morgan had "insufficient qualifications and competence related to the proposed appointment." As for his resumé, here it is: Morgan was raised on a farm near Carstairs, Alta., that did not have indoor plumbing until he was 13 years of age. A graduate of the University of Alberta, he had three decades of executive experience in the oil and gas industry, culminating with his position as CEO of EnCana Corp., Canada's largest energy company. EnCana has a market value of $43 billion. Morgan is a past recipient of the University of Alberta's Canadian Business Leader Award, the Ivey Business Leader Award from the alumni of the University of Western Ontario's business school, is a member of the Alberta Business Hall of Fame and, in 2005, was named Canada's Most Respected CEO in a survey of his peers conducted by Ipsos-Reid.

Q *How's your mood?*

A: Well, my mood is that I'm going to have a lot more time to spend on my boat this summer, here on the beautiful West Coast, than I would have had otherwise.

Q: *In 2003 you told* Maclean's, *"If the world deals you a tough blow, buck up and move on." Is that your attitude?*

A: Yeah. That's right. I had a great friend who, unfortunately, passed away recently, a woman named Giselle Richardson. She taught me transactional analysis. She always said, "All you can do in life is your own 50 per cent." What that means is that you can't control other people. You can just do your best. But what I really feel badly about is that the people of Canada won't be given, at least in the near term, a process for ending patronage appointments.

Q: *The Prime Minister has refused to name anyone else to take your place. This has caused his critics to accuse him of "petulance."*

A: Harper had two choices. He could have overruled the committee and carried on with the commission. Or, he could have put someone else before the committee. And there isn't anyone else who's going to go before that death squad after what I've been through. So there was no practical way in which he could go ahead unless he overruled.

Q: *And do you support the Prime Minister's decision not to overrule?*

A: I do. When the whole basis for doing something is accountability, transparency and democracy—that isn't the way I would have wanted to start.

Q: *At what moment did you understand that the outcome of the session had been decided well in advance?*

A: My wife and I were out of the country on business the whole week before. When I got back to Canada, I read in the *Globe* a rumour that there was some potential for this. When I arrived in Ottawa on the Monday to prepare with the people from the Privy Council's Office and the Prime Minister's Office for Tuesday's session, it became more clear then. Their intelligence network, if you like, told them this was most likely going to happen.

Q: *So you walked into the committee room knowing that it was unlikely that you were going to be approved?*

A: Yes. I did. I expected an attack. I expected they would attack my character. But I didn't expect it would be as strong and sustained as it was. I decided I would take the high road and whatever happens, happens. Afterwards I was talking to some people who were in the audience, and they caught something very early, which I guess I noticed, but not to the same degree that they did. I think the first questioner was Joe Volpe. In the first two sentences of his question he referenced [former Winnipeg mayor and defeated Lib-

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ROGERS
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eral candidate] Glen Murray Glen Murray was supposed to head the National Round Table on the Environment and the Economy for the Martin government in 2005 And he had a pretty rough ride [from the Commons committee] They concluded that he didn't have the qualifications he needed and voted against him Prime Minister Martin overruled the committee and appointed him anyway So as soon as Volpe mentioned Murray—one of my friends said "Okay This is all about revenge" And at least as far as Volpe goes, that's what it was

Q: *Okay—so if for Volpe it was about revenge, then for Peggy Nash was it about punishing you for comments you made in a speech to the Fraser Institute in 2005? I believe these are the comments she took the greatest exception to, "the vast majority of violent, lawless immigrants come from countries where the culture is dominated by violence and lawlessness Jamaica has one of the world's highest crime rates driven mainly by the violence between gangs competing for dominance in the Caribbean drug trade. Why do we expect different behaviour in Toronto, Ontario than in Kingston, Jamaica? Similarly, a portion of our Indo-Chinese immigrants have lived in situations where violence is necessary to survive. Again, the violent behaviour continues in Canada. It's fair to say that most immigrants who abuse our society have come in as refugee claimants rather than 'economic immigrants.' This not only means they are more likely to have violent tendencies, but also much less likely to have the skills, training and attitude necessary to contribute to our society"*

A. That whole speech was about political correctness and about the things that politicians are afraid to say Peggy Nash was the most vicious of the group Her own Toronto riding has huge violence in it And she continues to blame it on the cutbacks of the previous provincial Tory government This is the sort of willful blindness that goes on In my speech I was talking about trying to help people overcome their problems, rather than glossing over them in the way that she and others do It's interesting—right from the very first time that I made that speech I had a lot of feedback National feedback. And some of the more interesting feedback I got was from individual immigrants. Every one of them said "Look, we came to Canada to escape violence And so we want Canada to come down hard on violence. We want the people who are welcomed into the country and commit violence not to go through 10 years and millions of dollars of litigation, but to get out." It was almost as if I had opened, unwittingly, a cascade of feeling We need to talk about these things Not in an anti-racial, or anti-immigrant way We need to say here are the problems and how are we going to deal with them? We must involve all of the leaders in our communities in an open way And that's not going to happen with the kind of reaction we've seen

Q: *What was the specific thing you said that Peggy Nash found the most incendiary?*

A: I referred to the Jamaican community If I had to do it again, I probably wouldn't have referred to a specific group

Q: *Why not, though? If you lose the courage to point out the obvious—who else will do it?*

A: I did say to Joe Volpe in the committee hearing that when I was growing up, when we thought about organized crime and gangs we mostly referenced the Sicilian Mafia. And when we talked about the Sicilian Mafia in that regard—and people even made movies about it—no one said you are being racist against Italians Because most people love Italians They just don't love those people who are committing crimes So it's not a racial thing It's all about behaviour And this is the same thing And so if I'm talking about Jamaicans, I'm talking about the ones who commit crimes There is a huge number of people who come from the Caribbean who are fantastic people So we have to distinguish between the drug runners and the gang members and the others. We have to find ways of screening them better so that when they come into the country, we know, at least to the extent that it's possible, that they don't have a record in the country that they've come from And we haven't done that.

Q: *Hmm How racist of you!*

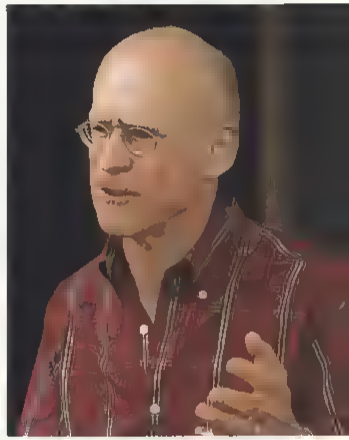
A: Yeah, well, I made my views on the subject clear, but in the end, it didn't matter

Q: *So if revenge was part of it, and intolerance for the truth was part of it, do you have any sense that part of why you were shot down was because the Liberals were embarrassed about the very need for a public appointments commission?*

A: I was shocked that Joe Volpe, who is running for the leadership of the Liberal party, spent a lot of his time trying to tell me that there was already a process in place He went through all the things you already have to do to make appointments, and told me I obviously didn't understand it very well, because if I did, then I would know we didn't need a commissioner of public appointments And my answer to him was that I didn't think Canadians would agree Patronage has been a notorious thing in this country for years Forever So I was very surprised that he was going down that road And later, in his comments as to his alleged reasons for voting against me, he was quoted as saying, "Mr Morgan didn't seem to understand the process that already exists" Well, I think I understand it pretty well!

Q. *What was the political motivation of the Bloc members who voted against you?*

A: Well, the Bloc members didn't like something *else* I said publicly I said that one of the reasons why Quebec was economically impaired, and has been for years, has been a combination of labour union rigidity and the separatist movement Plus the fact that a lot of kids in the educational system are deprived of a proper English education They get a good French education but they are living in a world where people from China, to everywhere else, are striving to learn English as a second language so they can be successful And then of course there's the threat of separatism, which constantly sets the province back. I said all those things were reasons why Quebec had a $100-billion debt. So they didn't like that



'One of my friends said: "Okay. This is all about revenge." And as far as [Joe] Volpe goes, that's what it was.'

Q: *So once again, they didn't like your ideas But isn't this the whole point? The Liberals, NDP, and Bloc shot you down not because you weren't qualified—but because your personal political opinions do not reflect theirs Weren't any of them embarrassed to be acting in such a partisan manner on an initiative that was designed to wipe out partisanship in appointments?*

A: What I tried to tell them over and over is that I have views, obviously And not everybody is going to agree with them But I was going to be part of a team. We had recruited a tremendous Canadian, Roy MacLaren, who

was a Liberal cabinet minister and who is well respected internationally. I was happy to get him. He has different views than I do. And we had a wonderful French Canadian woman. Her name is Jacqueline Boutet. And she's been a single mom and she's done tremendously well and she had agreed to come on board. And Hassan Khosrowshahi from Vancouver, who is an Iranian immigrant who came over here and ended up building the Future Shop. He and his wife are so passionate about Canada because they know what we really have here, and they want to try to protect it.

Q: *And they were all, like you, going to work for $1?*

A: Yes, they were all going to work for $1. And I said, look, this is the team we are building. And we have one person yet to come in from Atlantic Canada. But every time I would say that—they would say, "No, we don't want to talk about those other people. This is all about you." It was petty, partisan politics inspired by various motivations, but at the end of the day, what really happened is that each of the opposition parties decided that they wanted to make life difficult for one of the Prime Minister's prime initiatives.

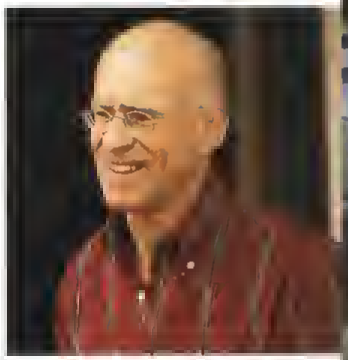
Q: *How was the commission going to work?*

A: This is not obvious from the name, but it was never going to be our role to appoint anyone. The process for public appointments—and there are about 4,000 of them in Ottawa—is that each agency or Crown corporation, through their own governance process, comes up with their own candidates. A recommendation then goes to the minister in charge of that portfolio and then the minister sends his decision to the Prime Minister. That chain wouldn't change. What we would have inserted into the process is a code of conduct. Historically what happened was that these were all patronage things. Someone would get appointed—a David Dingwall or whomever—without people even knowing the job was open. So there was no transparency, and no significant advertisement. A friend once told me about her experience on the board of a Crown corporation. The corporation needed a new CEO. The board went through a big procedure and submitted their No. 1 name, and some others in order of preference. They didn't hear a thing until somebody entirely different was selected. A failed minister or somebody like that. So obviously, that's what we're talking about. We were going to require that candidates be matched against a posted set of skills. Before a minister could fill a position, he would have to satisfy the commission that the process met the guidelines of the code of conduct. The commission would have the right to audit and look through all of the records. And then, the real teeth of this thing, where people start to shake in their boots, is that we would have reported annually to the Prime Minister, and tabled in the House, the appointments we felt didn't meet the code. And that was the reason we had power. Do you know what's really ironic about this? The Harper government was not only willing to give up one of its most prized possessions—i.e. the right to make patronage appointments with no questions asked—but they were also willing to subject themselves to the policing of a commission that was made up of a guy who, sure, was a Tory, but another guy who was a Liberal, and other people who have different backgrounds altogether. As I told the opposition—you are being given an opportunity here. We had an opportunity to raise the standard of public appointments in Canada to be the best in the democratic world. So, at least for now, until the Harper government gets a majority, we will be deprived of that.

Q: *Do you think the residue from this process has the potential to become an election issue?*

A: It all depends on whether people care enough. I hope they do. The public service, generally, were very happy about the proposed changes and it's not hard to understand why. Let's say you're working at VIA or the CBC and you never know who in the heck your next boss is going to be—but you're pretty sure that their qualifications for the job won't have much to do with them getting the job. It's demoralizing for people. And I'm sad about that. I'm not sad for myself. I'll be fine.

Q: *No, we're not worried about you. But in the event there is a Harper majority in the future and he comes back and offers you this job again, would you be interested?*



'There isn't anyone else who's going to go before that death squad after what I've been through'

A: I don't know. I think that I would have to examine at the time what else I was doing. Obviously I believe strongly in what this was all about, and I happen to have, I think, both the skills and the background to do it. But I just don't know.

Q: *As so many of the country's editorialists have pointed out, there is a fear that as a result of your experience, other highly capable, leading Canadians will look at this as one more reason to shun public service. And that's a terrible loss for a country that craves a higher calibre political class.*

A: I guess I had an idealistic dream in some ways—recalling the C.D. Howe period during the war—where a couple of top executives ran the inflation control board and the war procurement board for $1 a year. Again my great friend Giselle Richardson said to me around the time I was thinking of retiring, "Gwyn, you've got to become a dollar a-year man because you have a lot to offer." And when Stephen asked me to do this, I said I would work for nothing—and then, in remembrance of my great friend, I said, "No, no. I won't work for nothing. It's got to be a dollar a year." But the point is, this whole idea of people reaching a point in their lives when they are leaders in their fields, whether in business, education or journalism, and they have reached a point in their life where they aren't as intensely involved in other things. And they would be prepared to apply their wisdom and talents and dedication to helping the country. I had this vision that this little group that we put together of dollar-a-year people—if we could do this job and be seen to be doing it well and have an experience that would be a positive one, we could really start a trend that way. And how much richer this country would be as a result. That, in terms of the bigger picture, is what I was trying to do. And I feel very badly about that today.

Q: *Well, I hope you won't give up on your vision because it's a good one.*

A: I'm going to do what I can to keep that vision from being killed entirely.

Q: *But at the same time, I hope you will never be tempted to temper your remarks or refrain from telling the truth as you see it.*

A: I will weigh my words even more carefully. But we can't build a better country if we are not honest with each other. One of the problems I have is that my father—people used to say—was painfully honest about things. He thought things through, but he was painfully honest. I think I've inherited some of that malady. M

PHOTOGRAPH BY DARREN STONE



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SINCE RADWANSKI, OTTAWA'S TOP 99 BUREAUCRATS HAVE SPENT $14,000,000 ON TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY IN A SYSTEM RIPE FOR ABUSE

BY CHARLIE GILLIS AND MICHAEL FRISCOLANTI

The fraud and breach of trust charges against him were said to be the final note in a crisis that, thankfully, had passed. George Radwanski had been some public servant—a dime-store Napoleon who, in the memorable words of auditor general Sheila Fraser, waged a "reign of terror" against staff who dared question his lavish ways. In two years, the paper trail shows, the then privacy commissioner spent taxpayer dollars as if living in the last days of disco, and when his $500,000 in travel and hospitality bills finally came before a parliamentary committee in 2003, official Ottawa wasted no time in shunning him. Politicians tisked. Editorialists fulminated. Fraser was called in to audit Radwanski's expenses, and the RCMP—acting on flagrant abuses she uncovered—opened their investigation.

Those who make their living on Parliament Hill have been eager to close the Great Book of Government Excess. The scandal, pundits and politicians assure us, has produced a "cultural shift." No more meaningless junkets. No more boozy dinners. As proof, they point to rules passed by the Paul Martin government requiring all senior bureaucrats, cabinet members, parliamentary secretaries and ministerial staff to post their travel and hospitality expenses on departmental websites. It's called "proactive disclosure," and it gave Canadians their first-ever chance to scrutinize—at the click of a mouse—the airline tickets and meal tabs of their top-level federal employees. For this and other reforms, Canadians owe Radwanski a "debt of gratitude," declared Pat Martin, a New Democrat MP who sat on the Commons committee that uncovered his misspending. "People are far more scrupulous with expenses now," he told the *Ottawa Citizen*. "If anything, the pendulum may have swung too far."

Actually, a closer examination of the thousands of expense reports online suggests the proverbial pendulum has barely swung at all. Consider this: between December 2003 and December 2005, 99 senior officials spent more than $100,000 each on travel and hospitality, including nine who topped $200,000, and one—the ambassador to France—who broke the $300,000 mark. But good luck finding that figure on a government website. Parliament's idea of "disclosure" is to post a mélange of unrelated, unaudited and in some cases incomplete figures that offer neither context nor comfort. No grand totals—not by individual, not by department and certainly not government-wide. A citizen curious to know how much senior Immigration officials spend on travel and hospitality will need a few spare hours and a calculator.

Maclean's combed through the data, using a spreadsheet to tally, rank and average the expenditures of more than 1,700 senior ministers and civil servants, totalling $46 million. Buried in the online filings is an array of dubious purchases, from a $12,000 plane ticket to South Africa to scores of pricey air fares of a senior civil servant who commuted between Vancouver and Ottawa. There's a $7,600 bill for a cocktail party, and $12,166 to send a "special envoy" from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to a meeting on the remote Pacific shores of Easter Island. Departmental audits show similar patterns of excess and bungling among rank-and-file employees. Justice officials upbraided for paying out a $16,000 fee after the last-minute cancellation of a conference at a luxury hotel; Fisheries workers spending $81,000 more than they should have on plane tickets that could have been had for a fraction of the price. Missing receipts, unapproved claims, trips that look suspiciously like holidays—they're all part of a billion-dollar travel and hospitality regime that, after more than a decade of attempts at reform, federal beancounters admit they still don't fully grasp.

Some government officials *Maclean's* contacted dismissed the exercise as overreaction. Travel and hospitality, they said, represent a mere fraction of federal spending, and the press tends to overplay rare instances of misconduct. But most acknowledged that the current situation can't hold. Ottawa's overall travel spending has reached $1.2 billion per year, yet the government lacks the tracking and discipline any company spending a modicum of that amount would employ to control the outflow of cash. It is a recipe for abuse, say critics, and for taxpayer anger. "There is a price to be paid for exploitative behaviour by civil servants," says Arthur Schafer, director of the Centre for Professional and Applied Ethics at the University of Manitoba, "and that price is public trust. Civil servants are in a trust relationship with the Canadian public, and that's much more important than the actual cost of first-class travel or fancy wines or decadent dinners."



AUDITORS SCOLDED JUSTICE OFFICIALS OVER A $16,000 CONFERENCE CANCELLATION FEE

EDMONTON'S Hotel MacDonald lost the conference but still got paid

IAN LINDSAY/VANCOUVER SUN

What constitutes too much is a matter of debate, of course. But the discussion might begin with John Watson, a mandarin appointed to the Privy Council Office (PCO) in late 2003 to oversee Aboriginal policy for then prime minister Martin. A former regional director of Indian and Northern Affairs in B.C., Watson was living on the West Coast when called to the capital for a one-year term. But the brevity of his appointment exempted him from federal guidelines requiring him to move, and when the term came up in early 2004, the government simply renewed it.

Watson, as a result, spent more than two years using airlines as others might use subways, commuting between Ottawa and his home in Vancouver at the astounding cost to taxpayers of $234,849. The total was good for No. 4 on the list of big spenders, ahead of all cabinet ministers and well above many individuals whose jobs actually require global travel. By comparison, the former minister of international development, Aileen Carroll, spent $168,861 during a similar period.

During his stint in the PCO, Watson boarded 50 flights per year to travel to and from work, and lived in hotels during what were typically week-long stays in Ottawa. In 2005 alone, he spent 209 nights in the capital, at a cost of $21,966.57. For the same amount, the feds could have rented him a luxury apartment at $1,800 per month.

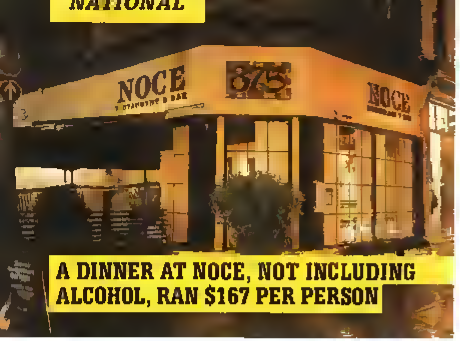
His did not, in fairness, sound like an especially pleasant life. Living from a suitcase, eating airline chicken, and staring at the bland decor of Air Canada's Maple Leaf Lounges is hardly an advertisement for a public service career. And no one disputes Watson's value in the sphere of Aboriginal affairs. While he did not answer an interview request, a PCO spokeswoman who responded on his behalf said his relationships in the native community were crucial in the development of the Kelowna accord, whose principles the current Conservative government is using to build its own Aboriginal policy.

But neither did Watson, his staff or his bosses make any apparent effort to save money under the circumstances. His hotel costs ate up thousands, and because his senior rank allowed him business-class privileges, he almost never booked a ticket for less than $2,700. A simple Internet search on Air Cana

JOHN WATSON, appointed to the Privy Council Office in 2003, provided critical contributions to the Kelowna accord



HIS OTTAWA-VANCOUVER COMMUTING COST $234,849



A DINNER AT NOCE, NOT INCLUDING ALCOHOL, RAN $167 PER PERSON

'HAD I known it was so expansive, I'd have gone elsewhere'

da's website shows that, by reducing himself to economy for, say, 10 round trips per year, Watson could have saved taxpayers more than $40,000. Had he reduced the frequency of his travel by half, he would have saved more than $100,000.

To John Williamson, federal director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, it is a remarkable case of bureaucratic presumption, and systemic incompetence. "If the job's in Ottawa, you ought to be in Ottawa," he says. "I don't think anyone is that valuable." But Watson's bills, the online filings show, were part of a pattern within government's senior ranks that suggested both an attitude of entitlement, and an absence of checks and balances. Some examples:

• Norine Smith, an assistant deputy minister at Environment Canada, flew to 14 foreign destinations and racked up $105,621 in travel expenses over a seven-month period in 2005 to discuss global warming with international counterparts. Her claims included an $8,544 ticket to Paris (price of a business class seat, with advance booking: $3,550) for "a high-level special session on the cost of inaction." Thus, ironically enough, while Smith's own department was commissioning a study on how aviation emissions contribute to global warming.

• Canada's mission in Paris must count among the most popular venues on the European diplomatic circuit. The ambassador, Claude Laverdure, spent fully $311,800 during our survey period, the vast majority on hospitality. His filings are a compendium of lunches "in support of visiting dignitaries," receptions billed as "advocacy to Canada's public policy," and cocktail parties that ran the taxpayer as much as $7,600. Granted, Paris is an expensive place to do business. But then so is Tokyo, and our ambassador to Japan, Joseph Caron, spent less than half what Laverdure did during the same period.

• Media handlers and public relations people are racking up large bills, too. Last October, Sandra Lavigne, director of public affairs for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, took a 10-day trip to New Zealand to attend a conference on mad cow disease. Airfare: $7,727.91. Denise Rudnicki, a communications director in the Department of Justice, spent $3,678.31 for a round-trip plane ticket to Edmonton, while Sarah Bain, a press secretary in Social Development Canada, spent $3,565.60 on a similar ticket to Vancouver.

• In December 2003, Richard Normandin, the vice-president of the National Research Council of Canada, spent $7,946.93 on a round-trip flight to Hawaii to attend a directors meeting of something called the Canada-France-Hawaii Telescope. An NRC spokeswoman said it was the lowest available fare at the time, adding: "We're normally very careful about what we spend on travel." But our own searches found that, with a few weeks' notice, an executive class ticket to Honolulu from Ottawa can be obtained for $2,442, even in peak season.

• Donna Petrachenko, a senior Fisheries official, spent $112,000 visiting Pacific Rim countries over two years as Canada's representative at, and for a time chairperson of, a little-known APEC group called the Integrated Oceans Management Forum. Her travels—including the $12,000 trip to Easter Island—were part of an ocean conservation initiative. To date, however, the group has produced little more than vaguely worded reports.

• On Sept. 20, 2005, Anne McLellan, then the minister of public safety and emergency preparedness, Jean Lapierre, then the transport minister, and nine other senior officials rang up $1,842 at Noce, a posh Toronto restaurant, during a four-hour dinner meeting "to discuss the Windsor border file." Leslie Swanman, Lapierre's chief of staff, picked up the tab. When contacted by *Maclean's*, Swartman described the dinner as a rare opportunity for department heads to "hash out this issue altogether." Wine was served, she said, but it wasn't charged to the public purse. Still, that means each person's dinner cost taxpayers an average of $167—not including alcohol. "I recognize that," Swartman said, when told that some Canadians might be offended by such a hefty bill. "Had I known it was going to be as expensive of a restaurant, I probably would have done it somewhere else. But you don't really find that out until you get there."

These instances by no means suggest Radwanski has a modern-day equal. There are no unexplained travel advances, no $10,000 tabs at nitzy Ottawa eateries, no $444 receipts amateurishly blotted with Liquid Paper. Still, they are conspicuously out of step with the government's own travel and hospitality guidelines—principles imbued with noble ideals of accountability and rectitude. Some of the officials surveyed, like Watson, are governed by policies called Special Travel Authorities, which allow them to book business-class tickets, among other perks. But these documents point back to the government-wide Travel Directive, a policy unequivocal in its intent to save tax dollars. "The standard for air travel is economy class," reads the document, negotiated between Ottawa and the white collar unions representing the bulk of its workers. "The lowest airfares appropriate to particular itineraries shall be sought and bookings shall be made as far in advance as possible." In other words, though some workers are permitted elite travel, all should be trying for low fares.

Some employees do take the injunction seriously. While Watson was piling up $3,000 trips, Philippe Rabot, the former chair of the RCMP external review committee, bought a $278.42 ticket to fly the very same route to attend a meeting. The contrast raises a host of questions. If a man of Watson's rank has the right to book such expensive tickets, does that mean he has to? Who is enforcing the travel guidelines? And finally, what kind of message are the big spenders sending their subordinates?

THE RADWANSKI case has actually made people more scrupulous, claims one NDP MP



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF HARRIS; TORY, JONATHAN HAYWARD/CP

THE RADWANSKI FALLOUT BROUGHT A 'CULTURAL SHIFT,' SOME SAY. BUT ABUSES CONTINUE.



AN AUDIT SHOWED DEFENCE STAFF WENT TO PLACES LIKE VEGAS, FOR TRAINING AVAILABLE LOCALLY

BETTER BOOKKEEPING could save DND $15 million/year in travel and hospitality costs

MISSING RECEIPTS,

CLAIMS NOT APPROVED, TRIPS THAT LOOK LIKE HOLIDAYS

Johnson Yip was the ideal employee, a loyal, ambitious bureaucrat primed for promotion. By 2004, he was stationed on the Lower Mainland, a top finance official in the Justice Department's British Columbia headquarters. The bosses considered Yip to be such a standout that they agreed to fork over $30,000 so he could pursue an executive MBA degree. He returned the favour by bilking the public purse out of more than $17,000—doctoring receipts, filing bogus expense forms and charging personal items, including electronic equipment, to his employee credit card. In January 2006, after being fired from his job and pleading guilty to fraud, he received an 18-month conditional sentence that included six months' house arrest and 75 hours of community service. He would eventually repay every penny he stole.

What is most troubling about Johnson Yip is not what he did, but how easily he was able to do it. Nobody is suggesting government buildings are overrun with criminals. But the government's own internal probes reveal that, from cabinet on down, the travel and hospitality system is vulnerable to abuse. Numerous departmental audits, including the one that first uncovered Yip's scam, reveal that mid- and low-level public servants are often just as careless with federal cash as their political masters. Worse, shoddy paperwork, toothless regulations and lack of oversight have ensured that even well-intentioned public servants squander cash.

• An audit that examined how the Department of National Defence manages its $260-million travel and hospitality budget concluded that better bookkeeping could save the Canadian Forces at least $15 million a year. In several instances, employees travelled to locations, including Banff and Las Vegas, for training sessions that were offered locally. An annual trade show in Orlando was the most popular destination, attracting 90 visitors in 2003/2004 at an approximate cost of $3,000 a head. DND did not need to send so many delegates, auditors said, adding that the Florida getaway was not the only example of overkill. Auditors also found that some travellers chose to "stay over a weekend, ostensibly to reduce flight costs. However, when additional hotel, meal and incidental costs were considered, total travel costs were more expensive—sometimes significantly—than for travellers who returned home immediately following business."

• Auditors had much tougher words for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. "We found several instances of high airfare costs (more than $3,000 for domestic and more than $5,000 for foreign)," auditors wrote in September 2005. "For one region, we identified 15 flights that cost $81,000 more than the lowest available flight as indicated by the travel provider, or an average of $5,400 extra per flight. For many of the 15 flights there was no explanation on file to justify the extra costs." In two separate cases, public servants travelling overseas purchased small amounts of currency at foreign hotels at an inflated exchange rate, only to turn around and claim all their meals and accommodations at that higher rate. As for hospitality expenses, auditors examined a random sample of 220 claims, discovering that half were either missing proper approval or exceeded the authorized cost. Nearly one-third of the time, the paperwork was so lacking that officials could not even figure out what was purchased.

• The internal auditors who caught up with Johnson Yip discovered other deficiencies in the Department of Justice. In March 2005, after examining 91 hospitality files, they found that 35 per cent contained not a smidgen of proof that the event in question was authorized. In one egregious example, the department paid a $16,000 cancellation fee to Edmonton's Hotel MacDonald after deciding—without bothering to do a cost/benefit analysis—to call off a planned conference at the last minute. Travel policies were also ignored. Before leaving on a business trip, every bureaucrat is supposed to fill out a travel authority and advance form (TAA), a standard document that outlines who, what, where, when, why and how. Auditors examined 331 such forms, concluding that every

ROBERT LANDAU/CORBIS

ONE AUDIT FOUND EVERY SINGLE TRAVEL FORM VIOLATED THE RULES IN SOME WAY

single one failed to comply, in one way or another, with Treasury Board rules. Among the violations, nine employees flew business or executive class when they were not entitled to the privilege.

It is tempting, under the circumstances, to point a finger at free-spending individuals, or the negligent managers. But every federal department seems plagued by the same overriding problem: disorganization. Simply put, government number crunchers lack a clear understanding of where most of the annual travel budget is diverted. They know precisely how much money was spent in fiscal year 2004/2005 ($1.2 billion), how many plane tickets were purchased (284,863) and the total price of those fares ($218 million). They also know where every employee went. That same year, for instance, 32,683 civil servants flew one way between Ottawa and Vancouver at an average airfare of $351 (that price is not only reasonable, but it reinforces the contrast of, say, John Watson spending four times that amount on a round trip ticket to the same location).

But the system clearly doesn't catch overly expensive tickets, and gives no context in which to assess them. And beyond airfares, where the money goes is anyone's guess. Hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of meals, taxis, hotel rooms and car rentals are filed away in a category one senior official described vaguely as "unknown"—a hodgepodge of expenses stored in countless filing cabinets across dozens of departments. Nowhere are those statistics collected and stored in one coherent, aggregate database, which, in the private sector, is considered the industry standard. "If someone said, 'How much did the government spend on private motor vehicle usage in Ontario?' we would not be able to tell you," says one Treasury Board official.

The absence of that vital data is emblematic of a much larger, long-standing problem that has quietly cost the public purse untold millions. Without an all-encompassing view of where travel cash goes, the government has been unable to do what many corporations have done for years: slash costs by buying in bulk or bartering side deals with individual suppliers. Civil servants in Heritage Canada might be renting cars from the same dealer that supplies vehicles to Health Canada, but nobody can say for sure, let alone negotiate a wholesale price.

CLAUDE LAVERDURE, ambassador to France



ANDREW VAUGHN/CP

THE AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE SPENT $311,800—$7,600 ON ONE PARTY ALONE

Reg Alcock, the former Liberal president of the Treasury Board, studied these shortcomings closely during his two-year tenure. He discovered that they date back to at least the 1980s, when the government attempted to apply private sector management theory to its operations, spreading authority further and further down the food chain. "The new mantra was let the managers manage," he explains. "The idea was to move operating decisions as close to the point of contact with the customer as you can." But government is not business, Alcock observes, and without the profit motive, there was little incentive for employees to save. There was certainly no appetite for the kind of computer expense-tracking common in major companies. Standing in for those safeguards was the noble harrumphing of the Travel Directive, which many departments interpret as optional. "How can this be?" Alcock recalls asking himself. "If Treasury Board is supposed to be holding you to account for this, how can you simply ignore its directive? There has been a real restructuring of power and authority in the government which allowed this to happen."

The auditor general officially sounded the alarm in 1995, urging the feds to compile all travel-related paperwork into one easy to read database loaded with electronic checks and balances. "With the emergence of new technology there is a potential to achieve savings by re-engineering activities and simplifying the travel administration process," auditors wrote. "Until there is better information and better coordination among central agencies and departments, the amount of cost reduction achieved will not be known." Eleven years later, Ottawa is still working on an answer. But it's close. In the coming months, the government hopes to finally implement the last few pieces of the Shared Travel Services Initiative (STSI), a long-awaited program that will integrate every step of the travel process, from booking to approval to reimbursement.

It is a costly overhaul. In November 2003, the feds agreed to pay Accenture Inc., a global consulting firm, $275 million over seven years to develop and oversee the program, which includes a travel agency, an online booking tool and corporate credit card services. Government policies—including the Travel Directive—are embedded directly in the system. If a civil servant tries to sidestep the rules and reserve a seat in business class, red flags will fly. Every single questionable expense will have to be approved, in advance, by a supervisor. "There are a number of safety nets," one official boasts.



ONE MAN, ONE MEETING, ONE ROUND-TRIP FLIGHT TO HAWAII: $7,946.93

'WE ARE normally very careful,' said one NRC spokeswoman

Portions of the new system are already up and running in some ministries, but the government-wide start date has been postponed more than once. In a report to Parliament tabled last year, the Public Works Department lamented the "significant delays" in the STSI, warning that "further delays could result in departments and agencies wanting to pursue independent travel solutions." Speaking to *Maclean's*, government officials downplay such concerns, insisting that the wait will be well worth it, including an annual savings of more than $100 million over the next nine years. Last fiscal year—even without the full roster of services—the government saved $19.6 million on airfare alone. "Everything you can think of is going to be in this travel expense system," said one Public Works employee. "We will be able to conduct better negotiations with the suppliers because we will know exactly how much we spent with each one of them."

While the feds were painstakingly implementing a high-tech remedy, Reg Alcock was hatching another, much simpler solution three years ago: sunshine. Publish expenses in a timely manner, he reasoned, and the Radwanskis would be smoked out before they could buy their next martini. His "proactive disclosure" system would start with the most senior employees, on the grounds that they spent the most, and that they set an example that hopefully their underlings would follow. For a time, it achieved the desired outcome. The year proactive disclosure took effect, government-wide spending on travel fell 6.2 per cent, to $1.19 billion.

But it's clear it's not working now. In addition to the many pricey tickets and other expenses revealed in the *Maclean's* investigation, overall spending is back up. Moreover, a sample of eight senior employees' filings done during the 2005 Fisheries audit showed that 38 per cent of hospitality claims were never posted, while a handful of trips were also left off. *Maclean's* own research revealed that some employees tacked expenses on after their quarterly deadlines. One problem, says the ethicist Schafer, lies in the disheveled state of the information, which makes it difficult to monitor for abuse or omission. "Providing masses of data isn't necessarily providing information," he says. "If the government really took accountability seriously, they would organize the data and present it in a way that would allow people to make reasonable judgments on what's happening."

All of which places the new Conservative government—which has staked its survival to accountability—at a crossroads. Does it correct the glaring flaws of proactive disclosure, introducing legal backstops to ensure it is accurate, comprehensive, and presented in a manner that allows interpretation? Or does it turn its back on the idea and bank on the promise of a state-of-the-art computer booking and tracking system?

For now, it is backing the disclosure horse. In an interview with *Maclean's*, Alcock's Tory successor, John Baird, says he supports the concept and would look at ways to improve it. His language is noncommittal. "If there are suggestions and proposals that will help increase transparency," he says, "we're all ears." But his tone sharpens when he learned employees might already be gaming the system. "I can tell you those departments are going to face greater scrutiny and accountability."

For Baird, it is all part and parcel of "changing the culture of entitlement" in Ottawa, a goal he says could take "weeks, months or even years" to achieve. If nothing else, his attitude represents an improvement over those who figure the culture has changed enough. But if Baird is serious, he is signing up for nothing less than a socio-political megaproject. Joining the dog pile on George Radwanski is one thing. Taking on a system that would let John Watson commute from Vancouver, and allow others to follow in his high-priced footsteps, is quite another. M

WITH *Meg Floyd*

For a complete list of top spenders, go to www.macleans.ca.

Clinton's Europe fix

The ex-president slags U.S. health care, and tells us to look abroad

BY JOHN GEDDES • As the world's most famous policy wonk, Bill Clinton can hold an audience on just about any issue. The man *can* talk. But when he gets onto health reform, his easy eloquence is backed up by hard-earned credibility. Few politicians carry more scars from tackling this one than Clinton, whose failed bid to overhaul the U.S. system almost derailed his first term as president. So it wasn't surprising when he spoke with some knowledge last week about Canada's debate over long waits for health procedures. He warned Canadians looking for solutions to avoid the high-cost "nightmare" of U.S. private insurance, and instead hold public hearings into how European countries manage wait times. "Surely there's somebody that's solved this problem that bothers so many Canadians," Clinton said, answering questions after delivering a wide-ranging speech in Toronto.

You'd think. But experts who have studied Europe's widely varying schemes aren't sure Canada is a close enough match for easy trans-Atlantic transplants of health policies. Germany, for instance, has radically different health insurance, with coverage based on employers, not government. France has many more doctors per capita, but they are paid far less than Canadian physicians. Which bits and pieces of these foreign systems might work well in Canada is far from obvious.

Still, Michael Decter, chair of the Canada Health Council, says it's well worth looking. "There's lots of richness to study there," he says, pointing in particular to progress in Britain. British hospitals have been spurred to improve by regularly published assessments of their performance. Tests for cancer are "clustered," Decter said, so a patient is likely to get a battery of them all at once rather than waiting for the results of one before the next is done. "It's innovation in a public system," he says, "and also some strategic use of private-sector delivery."

The debate can only heat up next month. The Canadian Medical Association, which tends to look to Europe for fresh ideas, plans to release a report on mixing public and private care. Clinton may never have figured out how to drive U.S. health reform, but he seems to have hit on a promising starting point for Canada's next wave of innovation. M

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WHO NEEDS PARIS?

Young French people are moving to Quebec. They like the stability.

BY MARTIN PATRIQUIN • Once the deep freeze ends and the last of the snowdrifts have melted into the gutter, Montrealers are prone to a yearly collective epiphany unencumbered by modesty. *Oh, yeah*, they think. *It's sunny out, the streets are a zoo, and I live in the best city in the world.* Deborah Desherres is practically addicted to the feeling. French by birth and a Montrealer by choice, Ms Desherres says she remembers every spring why she left Paris six years ago, and why she will not likely ever go back. Quebec, she says, is free of the politics, the rigidity and the stifling bureaucracy of her birthplace. A few weeks ago, the 26-year old decided to change careers. She sent out her resumé, and had seven responses the following week. Her favourite bakery, fishmonger and bookstore are within shouting distance of her apartment. "I feel like I live in a village where everyone is happy," she gushes from her usual spot at her local Starbucks.

Many of Desherres's fellow French would agree. According to statistics from Quebec's Immigration and Cultural Affairs Ministry, there has been an increase of nearly 70 per cent in the number of French emigrés to Quebec in the last 10 years. In 2005, some 4,000 people, most of them young, left *La République* for the province, causing a few minor tremors in the French press. "Quebec is a veritable vacuum cleaner of young French people," declared *La Liberation*, apparently with a straight face. Though it's hardly an exodus, those who leave are usually forthright about their decision. "I have nothing against my country, but it's hard to be young there," says 24 year old Mathilde Singer (pronounced *singe ere*), a journalist who moved to Montreal seven months ago. At about 10 per cent, France's unemployment rate is one of the highest among developed nations. Among those 25 and under, the rate is a staggering 22 per cent.

Once on these shores, according to Quebec immigration statistics, French people are more likely than other immigrants to integrate into the community and find a job: the unemployment rate among French immigrants is roughly six per cent, significantly lower than Quebec's overall rate. They are also more likely to move beyond Montreal into the regions. And about 80 per cent of those who leave France end up staying in the province.

The idea of Quebec as a politically tranquil and bureaucracy free oasis might elicit guffaws (or worse) from some. But the fact that most émigrés think this just shows the extent of the state's reach in France. Among developed nations, it remains one of the hardest in which to get an apartment—never mind a loan to start a business. "I could never have done this in Paris," says Fred Loury, 35, who opened Galerie SAS, a downtown art gallery, four years ago. "In Paris, you need a lot of money, because there are lots of start up taxes and you'll be judged constantly." In Quebec? "I paid $55 to register the name," says Loury, resplendent in wing-tip shoes and skinny T-shirt, brown hair perfectly slicked back. "Then I found a space and created my universe."

'I HAVE NOTHING AGAINST MY COUNTRY, BUT IT'S HARD TO BE YOUNG THERE,' SAYS ONE ÉMIGRÉ

Indeed, there is a tendency among the French to idealize Quebec as a quaint and bucolic paradise where everyone gets along. Reality, of course, is generally harsher. There is crime, garbage and, yes, even political uncertainty. "It's their version of the American dream," says Immigration Quebec's Claude Fradette. "At the same time, though, emigrating is difficult, and thinking you can integrate in Quebec society just because you speak French is like saying I can easily emigrate to London because I speak English."

To counter this impression, Quebec's Paris-based immigration office gives weekly courses on Quebec life that are at once convivial ("Quebecers are known for their *joie de vivre* and their sense of humour") and cautionary ("Winters are cold and snowy"). "To immigrate successfully, you have to have a lot of modesty," reads one online testimonial, apparently warning émigrés to tone down the attitude. "You think you know everything, when you actually have everything to learn."

In Montreal, a city of communities, there is no French equivalent to the Italian, Greek, Jewish and Haitian neighbourhoods, among others. People from France, individualists by nature, have dispersed throughout the city—something that suits Desherres just fine. But having moved away from France partly to get away from French people, it is a testament to Quebec's popularity overseas that she has run into a few too many as of late. "They can be very disagreeable," she says—like a true Montrealer. M



'I FEEL LIKE I live in a village where everyone is happy,' says Desherres of her new home

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROGER LEMOYNE

FOR THE RECORD

NASTY GIVE AND TAKE: GOODBYE TO ALL THAT

"You don t know where the questions are going to come from, and you know that the preamble is always going to be nasty. I enjoyed just being nasty back and I enjoyed the give and take. And I do appreciate the opposition because when they finally get down to the questions, they're usually intelligent." Soon-to-retire Alberta Premier Ralph Klein says he will miss crossing swords with the opposition in the legislature

A DEDICATED PRESENCE IN IRAQ

Yes, Canada has troops there. And they've been around for a while.

COLIN CAMPBELL • Several times a year, a group of Canadians gets together at a place called the "Canadian building" in Baghdad. Tucked away in the relative safety of the guarded Green Zone, the building is actually Canada's soon-to-be-opened embassy in Iraq, staffed by a small number of Canadian consular officials. The informal parties are arranged by emails traded by Canadians who meet inside the Zone. Guests include security contractors, government officials, police officers—a sampling of Canada's small but dedicated presence in Iraq.

From the very first days of the U.S.-led Iraq war, Canadians have been deeply involved: setting up crime-fighting units, working as engineers with coalition forces, serving with the UN, flying planes that help guide missile attacks, even fighting. There are anywhere from 100 to 200 working in the country. Iraq may be an unpopular, troubled conflict, but it is a place everyone, from soldiers to high ranking officials, acknowledges Canada cannot, and has not, ignored.

Insp. Ron van Straalen, an Ontario provincial police officer, flew into Iraq in January 2005. "What caught me right away was the amount of security needed to move me around," he recalls. After flying to Kuwait, then hopping a military transport plane to Baghdad, he waited several hours to catch the next U.S. helicopter into the Green Zone, where he began his stint as one of two Canadian police officers advising Iraq's Ministry of the Interior. "That was my first taste of how things function and how you have to operate."

Van Straalen was part of an RCMP program to help train Iraq's police force. (Canadians are also part of an international effort in Jordan to train Iraqi police officers.) During his year there, van Straalen was highly involved in the fight against the insurgency. His main task involved re-establishing the Iraqi police's forensic capabilities by rebuilding labs across the country. He also helped develop bomb disposal capability, decimated by lack of equipment, training, and the sheer number of bombings. "There's a strong insurgency," van Straalen says. "But the majority of what we're seeing is crime-related, like kidnapping, murder, extortion. What the police need are experts and the capabilities to deal with these major crimes."

The rescue of the two Canadian Christian Peacemakers, James Loney and Harmeet Sooden, in March provided a rare glimpse into Canada's ability to operate in Iraq. Our officials were involved from the morning after the abduction. But the groundwork was laid much earlier, when the FBI was building a task force to fight major crimes in Iraq, including the rash of abductions. One source they looked to was van Straalen, because of his Interior Ministry connections. "Within a month we had a task force of 20 up and running," he says. In addition to Iraqi-American forces like that one, and the British and U.S. militaries, the Peacemaker rescue included the RCMP, the Canadian military and the Department of Foreign Affairs—all working inside Iraq.



AN IRAQI police officer disperses a crowd after a 2005 attack on a U.S. military vehicle

When Canada reluctantly admitted to playing a role in the mission, Prime Minister Stephen Harper said Canadians shouldn't be surprised that a small number of Canadian soldiers are in Iraq. "That's been the case since the beginning of the war," he said. For three years, some Canadians troops have been in Iraq as part of a long-standing exchange program that places soldiers with U.S., British and other NATO forces.



AN RCMP CONSTABLE teaches Iraqi police to shoot a 9mm pistol in training in Jordan

Maj. Ghislain Sauvé, on exchange with the British, crossed into Iraq on March 22, 2003, wearing his Canadian Forces uniform "with flags and everything," he says. Sauvé had been with the British military for three years, and had served in Afghanistan. A member of an engineer unit, he was second in command of a team charged with setting up military camps. "I was never exposed to any danger per se," says Sauvé, now at CFB Borden near Toronto. "Did I hear gunfire and explosions? Sure. It was a war." Sauvé was given the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, a rare distinction for a Canadian. The award was pinned to his uniform by the Queen at Buckingham Palace.

CANADIANS FIGHTING ON THE SIDE OF THE INSURGENCY COULD BRING HOME WHAT THEY LEARN THERE

The decisions to let Sauvé and others serve in Iraq are made on a case-by-case basis, says Lt.-Col. Roland Lavoie, a Canadian Forces spokesman. No soldier has been pulled from an exchange because of Iraq. But Lavoie stresses that Canada does not send soldiers to Iraq—soldiers follow their foreign unit. On average, there have been about five soldiers on exchange there at any one time (as of last month, there were two, both with the British). But at the beginning of the war there were as many as a few dozen, most serving as flight crews on exchange with U.S. forces. Canadians regularly flew AWAC surveillance planes, which help guide fighter jets, over Iraq.

Joint programs between the Canadian and U.S. militaries have become increasingly common, especially since 9/11. U.S. Marine Sgt. Scott Crichton, a native of Edmonton, trained with his unit for a deployment to Iraq alongside a Canadian battalion at a U.S. military airport in Victorville, Calif. The exercises focused on urban warfare, something Crichton experienced first-hand during his two tours in Iraq. He describes the country in the matter-of-fact language of a soldier. "It was hot," he says on the phone from Camp Pendleton, a U.S. Marine Corps base north of San Diego. His advice for dealing with roadside bombs: "Keep your eyes straight." Finding other Canadians on the ground was also not uncommon, he says. Two others from his battalion have served in Iraq. In fact, more than 100 Canadians have gone south to join the U.S. military since the war began.

Canada has good reason to be involved, says Martin Rudner, the director of the Canadian Centre of Intelligence and Security Studies at Ottawa's Carleton University. According to CSIS, Canadians are also fighting in Iraq with the insurgency, and "the fear is they are going to return and bring the lessons they learned," Rudner says. Far better, he adds, for the insurgency to be crushed before such fears are realized. The other major Canadian concern in Iraq is oil—Canada, like other Western countries, has a strong interest in making sure the Middle East is stable, to avoid major disruptions in the global economy.

Canada has maintained an almost uninterrupted presence in Iraq since 1988, when it sent soldiers to the region, says Sean Maloney, a professor at the Royal Military College of Canada. Canadians have played important roles in a number of UN and U.S.-led efforts, as weapons inspectors and military observers, in a decade-long campaign to contain the Saddam Hussein regime, he says. In 1991, Canadian CF-18s supported the U.S.-led air campaign in the first Gulf War, and in 1998 Canada sent frigates to the Gulf to support U.S. operations. The unwavering involvement in Iraq amounts to an unwritten, though ambiguous, policy, says Maloney. "Every time we send someone to the Gulf there's a reason for doing it. We're keeping an eye on it and remaining involved. We didn't just do this haphazardly," he says. "This is part of Canadian policy." M

SCOTT OLSON/GETTY IMAGES (TOP); KARIM KADIM/AP

Divided under God

A new book looks at the ethical implications of ethnic resettlement

BY MICHAEL PETROU • Eight decades ago, the politicians and great statesmen of the world looked down on a seemingly intractable ethnic and religious conflict in the Balkans and Anatolia (soon to be part of Turkey). They decided the solution would be to "unmix" peoples and move them into homogeneous nation states. The result was the 1923 Lausanne treaty and the expulsion of almost two million people from their ancestral homes. Greek Orthodox Christians who had lived for centuries in Anatolia were moved across the Aegean Sea to Greece, a country most had never seen. And Muslims living in Greece were likewise shipped eastward to the new state of Turkey, an equally foreign land.

The story of this "population exchange" and its ramifications is evocatively told by Bruce Clark in his recently published *Twice a Stranger: Greece, Turkey and the Minorities They Expelled* (Granta, 2006). Clark, the European affairs and religion editor of *The Economist*, blends the personal histories of refugees and their descendants with an astute account of the larger diplomatic forces that shaped their lives. He correctly notes that massacres and ethnic cleansing were already well underway by the time negotiations began at Lausanne. But in hundreds of towns and villages on both sides of the Aegean, Greeks and Turks, Christians and Muslims, also lived harmonious, integrated lives. When politicians decreed that these communities should also be "unmixed," those who stayed prepared feasts for their departing neighbours and wept when they left.

The scars of this population exchange are still visible in Greece and Turkey today—in ruined and abandoned churches and mosques, and also in familial ties that span the Aegean. But Lausanne's most potent legacy is unfolding elsewhere. For all the pain that it caused, the population exchange arguably decreased the likelihood of all-out war between Greece and Turkey in subsequent years, and some still champion forced separation as a model for ending ethnic conflict.

Ethnic cleansing continues in the former Yugoslavia, under the eyes of the police and soldiers from the world's most powerful countries. There are those in Israel today who argue that the expulsions of the 1948 war should be completed so that Jews and Arabs no longer live among each other in the Holy Land. And in Iraq, some commentators think that, with the escalating sectarian violence, it would be better to divide the country into three states—for the Kurds, the Sunnis and the Shias.

History is a good but imperfect guide to the future. A population exchange appeared to be the easy way out for the international diplomats and politicians who sought a solution to ethnic and religious divisions in Asia Minor 83 years ago, and it still beguiles statesmen looking for simpler solutions to conflicts today. Clark warns us that ethnic resettlement, even with a transparent veneer of respectability bestowed by the international community, is a tragedy with repercussions that last long after families are transplanted and borders redrawn.

When he was suffering from nostalgia, an appropriately Greek word meaning a sickness or yearning for home, my grandfather, living in the west end of Toronto, would play Turkish music. He was Greek and as such held typically immoral views about the Turks. But he was born a subject of the Ottoman Empire and would not become a Greek citizen until his village was won for Greece from the Turks in the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913. Perhaps the Turkish music reminded him of his childhood in northern Greece, or maybe it just sounded vaguely familiar. The Greeks and Turks who were driven from their homes because they were the "wrong" religion experienced a much more acute sense of dislocation. It is thus that is the most tragic result of the intentional "unmixing" of people who have lived together, for better and for worse, for centuries. "When the Aegean peoples were prised apart," Clark writes, "each lost a part of its own identity, and hence the ability to understand itself." M



PURE AND TRUE: Turkish nationalists triumph in 1922



AT A CLINIC in Tuka, funded by UNICEF

Cracking down in Ethiopia

Our largest aid program goes to a country led by a strongman. Should it?

BY CHRIS TENOVE • "If the police see me do this, they might arrest me," says Elias. An earnest 21-year-old dressed in a Chelsea soccer jersey, he is clearly excited by the risk he's about to take. He glances around the café, where men sip macchiatos and gaze meditatively at the donkeys, cars, beggars and shoe shine boys that ply this Addis Ababa street. Satisfied that no one is watching, Elias raises two fingers in a "V for victory" salute.

Last year, during a national election campaign, hundreds of thousands paraded through Ethiopia's capital flashing the V sign—the wordless gesture of solidarity with opposition parties. Times have changed. Elias saw his 18-year-old neighbour killed by police during a political demonstration. He's had friends taken away in the night during police sweeps. And since March, a series of small bombs has exploded in restaurants and taxis, resulting in five deaths but no arrests.

In this charged atmosphere, the Canadian embassy oversees one of our country's largest foreign development programs. Last year, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) spent over $83 million here on projects that ranged from meals for schoolchildren to rehabilitating watersheds. But those aid dollars were earmarked before Prime Minister Meles Zenawi and his government orchestrated the recent crackdowns. Now Canada faces a dilemma. Given the current assault on human rights in Ethiopia, should we keep the aid faucets open?

We're not in this quandary alone. In recent years, Ethiopia looked poised to become an "aid darling"—one of those poor but relatively well-governed countries favoured by foreign donors. Last year, the international community gave over US$1.9 billion in aid, with more planned. Two years ago, it also decided to try something different. Rather than fund aid organizations to provide a patchwork of services, Canada and other donors funnelled aid directly into government coffers. In turn, the government agreed to spend the money on services like education and health care. This year, donors were set to give US$500 million in "direct budgetary support."

RELATIVELY STABLE AND AN ALLY IN THE WAR ON TERROR, ETHIOPIA NEEDS TO BE HANDLED GENTLY

The venture required considerable trust. As one embassy official noted, "With direct budgetary support, donors aren't just dating the Ethiopian government, they're married to it." A key foree in earning that trust was Meles Zenawi. The prime minister, as both critics and fans will say, is a persuasive man, able to talk like a democratic reformer or a World Bank technocrat when needed. "I always thought that Meles was going to save this country," says a long time Western diplomat based in Addis. "He comes across as a calm and rational leader, but right under the surface is a hard-core ideologue with a psychopathic willingness to kill his own people to keep power." (Like most people interviewed for this article, the official refused to be identified. The government has expelled several NGOs and recently banished the correspondent for the Associated Press.)

Only last May, Ethiopia was enjoying the freest election campaign in its history. In Addis Ababa's cafés, people flipped through anti-government newspapers and watched lively televised debates. On the streets, opposition supporters waved the two-fingered V-sign. "The election process was quite fair and open until election day," says a foreign electoral observer who was in Ethiopia last year. "But when the polls closed and it looked like there was a chance the opposition could win, then everything changed." The observer believes Meles's ruling party would have won a majority in a completely fair election, "but they weren't willing to take that chance."

In the months that followed, opposition politicians disputed the election results and called for strikes. Over 80 people were killed during protests. Police swept through Addis Ababa and rounded up thousands of young men and women, holding them for weeks in detention camps. The government also charged 131 opposition politicians, journalists, and human-rights activists with offences including treason and genocide. The detainees, among them the elected mayor of Addis Ababa, await trial in a prison on the outskirts of town.

There was a time when the quality of government seemed to make little difference to foreign donors. The U.S. lavished support on the Zairean dictator Mobuto Sese Seko, for example, who used state funds to build a mansion with a cellar designed for 15,000 bottles of wine. But donors came to understand that despots, warlords and kleptocrats tend to spend aid dollars poorly. So when Meles's government tightened its political stranglehold, foreign donors, including Canada, took action. They froze the remaining US$375 million of the US$500 million slated for direct budgetary support. Donor representatives held a tense meeting with Meles, who was unrepentant. "If you don't want to invest in our country," he reportedly said, "then go elsewhere."

Should that be Canada's long-term policy? Should we direct our aid to well-governed nations that will likely use it efficiently? Or should we tolerate waste, and possible misuse by unsavoury rulers, if it means we can help the world's most desperately poor?

In a recent foreign-policy review for the C.D. Howe Institute, John Richards argues that Canada does a poor job of focusing aid dollars on well governed countries. But the Catch-22 is that the poorest countries tend to have the worst governments. "For Canada to pull out of all countries with bad governance would mean that we would almost completely pull out of Africa," admits Richards, professor of public policy at Simon Fraser University. "What we need to do is use conditionality and *realpolitik* so we can leverage improvements in governance."

One obstacle is that Canada is usually a minor player in countries where it operates. Danielle Goldfarb, a senior policy analyst at C.D. Howe, suggests that CIDA would have more influence if it focused its resources on fewer countries, or on specific sectors such as health care or education. Both she and Richards believe our government should encourage a broader debate about foreign aid policy. "Canadians have an inflated view of our role in the world," Goldfarb says. "But our actual development policies get very little public attention."







DISSENT: Symbols of support for opposition parties are now banned under Meles (bottom)

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: GETTY IMAGES; ANTHONY MITCHELL/AP/CP; KAREL PRINSLOO/AP/CP; AFP/GETTY IMAGES

In Addis Ababa, everyone from taxi drivers to disgruntled bureaucrats has a policy recommendation for foreign donors. Hard-line government critics want aid withheld until the human rights situation improves. Many diplomats, however, believe that the government should be handled gently. Not only is Ethiopia a loyal ally in the American war on terrorism, it's an island of tranquility and good governance when compared to neighbouring Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea.

Beyene Petros, chair of the opposition party United Ethiopian Democratic Front, takes a moderate position. Donors like Canada need to better monitor aid money spent, he says. But he opposes reductions. "If you can get water to villages and irrigation to crops, or improve education and health care, I don't have any argument against that," he says. "I don't want to try to make politics over starving bodies. That is too hard-hearted."

Six hundred kilometres south of Addis, far from the political turmoil, Diramu Arero waits outside a ramshackle clinic with her two young children. Early this morning, they hiked across a landscape of scorched orange soil and scrub bush. The region has been caught in a drought that stretches across the horn of Africa, affecting millions. In past droughts, children weakened by malnutrition fell prey to disease epidemics. UNICEF launched a vaccination campaign to prevent that from reoccurring. Canada contributed $26.5 million, using money saved when it froze direct budgetary support to Ethiopia.

Diramu lost a child to measles in the last drought, but disease is not her only concern. Her family depended on cattle for income and for food. But drought killed the herd. "I sell firewood for money," she says. "If someone could help me buy a donkey to carry the wood, then maybe I could provide for my children. But there is no one to help us."

The vaccination campaign is a necessity, one that may save thousands of lives, but it won't help people like Diramu escape from poverty. There are no easy solutions for that. The only certainty is that despair over the government in Addis and a quick disengagement from Ethiopia will not be the way. M



AFGHANISTAN: HORNY NAME GETS DROPPED

Dutch peacekeepers in Afghanistan have had the name of their operation changed from "Unicorn" because they feared that troops from Canada, Australia and Britain were laughing at them. According to Dutch Ministry of Defence spokesman Otte Beeksma, "unicorn" has homosexual connotations among Anglo-Saxons. To stifle the smirking around Kandahar, the ministry has changed the operation's name to "Uruzgan Taskforce."

THE QUEEN OF THE AIRWAVES

How a cross-dressing TV host is shaking up Pakistani broadcasting



BY NANCY MACDONALD • He's just a feminist, cross-dressing TV queen. But in Pakistan, Ali Salim, the 27-year-old son of a retired colonel, stands out like the faux velvet couch from which he does interviews. Better known for his drag persona—foxy diva on the hunt—he's become the uber-militarized South Asian state's most famous TV personality.

Salim, who believes his act empowers, not satirizes, women, grew up awed by his divorced mother. He first found fame impersonating former Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto, currently exiled in Dubai, who was the first woman to lead a Muslim country. Waxed, made up, sometimes donning a jewelled mini sari, Salim has a salty schtick that's a first in a country long dominated by mullahs and the military. (On a recent Saturday, eyelids lowered, he turned to big-time lawyer Aitzaz Ahsan and whispered, "Would you mind if I call you 'easy'? It's so much easier on the tongue.")

But it's not all camp and innuendo. Trampling taboos in spiked heels, Salim didn't shy away from discussing the case of Mukhtar Mai, the woman gang-raped on the orders of her village court. He's also levelled awkward questions at politicians and hard-liners, like Nazimatullah Khan, the former mayor of Karachi and a member of the Jamaat-e-Islami religious party.

The hour-long *Late Night Show with Begum Nawazish Ali* runs on Aaj TV, one of about 25 channels created since Pakistan's president, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, liberalized media laws in 2003 as part of a larger plan to introduce "enlightened moderation" to the country. Some observers wonder whether Salim's show will survive as he teases both the military and the fundamentalists (he calls them "fundos"). At present, though, the two groups are distracted, and at loggerheads for his support of the U.S. war on terror after 9/11, Musharraf—the fourth military leader to steal office by coup—has enraged Pakistan's many Islamist groups. Given the mounting political turmoil, dealing with a cross-dressing TV host may not, for the moment, be a particularly high priority. M

Dell: from genius to moron and back


STEVE MAICH

In the world of CEOs, you are only ever a genius or a moron. There is no happy medium. When sales are growing and the stock is rising, the world kisses your feet. Hit a bad stretch, even a speed bump, and you're a joke. The only thing that makes the carousel tolerable—well, besides the money—is the sure knowledge that your luck will always turn around eventually.

Take, for example, Michael Dell and Steve Jobs, two men who seem destined to forever be on opposite sides of fate's coin toss.

Back in 1997, Dell was the visionary and Jobs was the chump. The latter had just returned to the helm of Apple Computer, the company he founded and which looked to be on the verge of collapse, when Dell took the opportunity to dump a little trash talk on his rival. Asked what he would do if he were CEO of Apple, Dell suggested surrender. "What would I do? I'd shut it down and give the money back to the shareholders," he laughed.

Four years later, Jobs had managed to pull Apple back from the brink, but Dell was still king of the computer industry. Apple had only recently launched its foray into digital music, and most of the world still didn't know what an iPod was. Jobs, who had always struggled to get decent shelf space at major retailers, decided to open a chain of Apple stores across the continent to showcase the company's flashy hardware. Dell, who pioneered selling direct to the public through call centres and the Internet, scoffed at Apple's retro, bricks-and-mortar approach. "We figured out 10 or 15 years ago that you don't need stores to sell computers," Dell said in an interview with CNBC. "Physical stores have been tried by a number of our competitors, and universally, that strategy hasn't panned out."

Well, so much for that.

Five years have now passed. The iPod has gone mainstream, Apple stores have become a phenomenally successful outlet for the company's sleek line of gizmos for hard-core technophiles, and the company's stock has risen about 466 per cent. Dell, meanwhile, has seen its share of the personal computer market shrink from more than a third to about 29 per cent at last count, and its stock is pretty much exactly where it was five years ago, when Dell launched his verbal spitball at Jobs' retail strategy. As a result, Apple has now surpassed Dell's market value by US$1 billion, and it's been awhile since the chairman had reason to gloat.

By selling boring black boxes at bargain prices, Dell did more than any other company to turn the computer into a commodity, and it's now wrestling with the dark side of its own no-frills business model. Rivals like Hewlett-Packard and Toshiba have learned to mimic Dell's efficiency, slashing component stockpiles and eliminating inventory of unsold machines. They've closed the gap on the industry leader and waged a battle for market share fought almost exclusively on the basis of price. (Last week, a Dell laptop could be had in Canada for $649 plus tax.) The results are showing up on Dell's bottom line. Last week, the company reported an eighth consecutive quarter of decelerating revenue growth. Its stock is down 38 per cent in a year. Suddenly everybody is talking about Dell in the past tense, and big-name Wall Street analysts are advising their clients to steer clear of the stock.

Michael Dell, your dunce cap is ready.

But as most of the world has fallen back in love with Apple, and become breathless about HP's resurgence, they've been too quick to dismiss the industry's stumbling giant.

Perhaps the most concise assessment of Dell's inherent strength came a few years ago, from a most unlikely source, Steve Jobs. At that point, Jobs was just beginning to reap the spoils of the iPod revolution and was asked to assess the differences between Apple and Dell, the world's two most successful computer companies. "We're making money because we're innovating," he said. "They're making money because they're Wal-Mart."

Jobs meant it as an insult, payback for Dell's many swipes at him over the years, but the point stands. Apple regained its stature by being constantly at the cutting edge of design. Dell stays on top through its size and efficiency, and that hasn't changed. Consider last week's "disappointing" earnings: revenue of more than US$14 billion, profit close to US$1 billion. This is a company with roughly three times the revenue and twice the profit as Apple, yet investors have decided Apple is worth more. Dell has an unparalleled business selling to large companies and the most efficient distribution network in the industry, and yet Hewlett-Packard—a company with profit margins less than half of Dell's—trades at a premium on the stock market.

Can Dell Computer be fixed? With a billion in quarterly profit, it's not even broken.



JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY

Can Dell be fixed? It's not even broken.

Bank of America analyst Keith Bachman last week issued a concise road map of how Dell can get back on track. Among his recommendations: focus on stabilizing and increasing profits, rather than sales; make more realistic forecasts and make sure you meet them; and seek out retail partners in the developing world to diversify away from North America and western Europe, into faster-growing markets. It's all relatively simple stuff, more of a tune-up than a turnaround, especially when you have the advantages of a strong brand, a huge distribution network, and US$9 billion cash in the bank.

Right now, Dell is reeling and Jobs is the toast of Silicon Valley, and that's only fair. Fortunes always reverse, and they will again. The lesson of history is clear: applaud the genius, but always bet on the moron. M

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LIQUIDATION World buys its discounted stock from stores going out of business

LIQUIDATOR WARS

A discount retailer takes its rivals to court. It's all about reputation.

BY MICHAEL FRISCOLANTI • When the first Liquidation World opened its doors 20 years ago, the owners subscribed to a simple business plan: search for companies in the midst of bankruptcy, buy their remaining inventory at a deep discount, and then turn around and sell the products at slashed prices. It worked. With 90 stores and counting across the country, Liquidation World Inc. is now the largest retailer of its kind in Canada, attracting nearly two million bargain-hunting shoppers every year.

Last Christmas, like it does every year, the company enticed holiday shoppers with its trademark slogan: "Santa Doesn't Pay Retail ...Why Should You?" As the big day approached, and checkout lines grew longer, employees in Calgary noticed another flyer floating around, this one from a new cross-town competitor: Liquidation Supercentre. "Why Pay Retail?" the advertisement asked. "Santa Doesn't!!!"

People flocked to the address on the flyer, including lawyers for Liquidation World, armed with a lawsuit demanding at least $600,000 in damages for trademark violation (the company is also suing two other businesses in Red Deer and Lethbridge, which operate under the name Liquidation Centre). "We've gone through a lot of effort to build a brand—a lot of effort, a lot of cost, a lot of advertising, a lot of marketing dollars," says Andrew Searby, Liquidation World's executive vice-president and chief financial officer. "And when you have somebody that consumers are confusing for yourself, then you are opening yourself up to the potential of having your reputation damaged."

At first glance, it seems laughable: a liquidator suing another liquidator for spoiling its status as the store of choice for cheapskate shoppers. But for Liquidation World—which sells everything from couches to groceries to designer luggage—the emergence of an alleged copycat comes at a bad time. After recording its first ever annual loss—$6.5 million in 2005—the chain is trying hard to redefine itself, renovating many of its old stores in the hopes of appealing to all types of shoppers, not just the kind who love to brag about the deal they got on a $4 tie. "We stock brand new, brand name merchandise," the company's website proclaims. "Many of the items we carry are the same as those you'll find in other stores around town. Some you won't find anywhere else. The fun is in discovering something new, unexpected, and at an unbelievably great price."

The last thing the company needs now is an imposter tarnishing its makeover. One of the defendants, for example, recently made headlines for selling illegal switchblades. "The main concern is the protection of our name," Searby says. "It takes a long time to create goodwill, and a very short time to destroy it." None of the defendants has filed a response to the lawsuit, but if Liquidation World gets its way, all three stores will be ordered to demolish their signs, pay some form of compensation, and think of a new name. And, of course, a new Christmas ad. M



PER LINDGREN/REX FEATURES

AMBULANCE DRIVERS GET LOST IN SPACE

Ambulance drivers in Britain sped to the rescue of 10-year-old Chloe Banks last week after she was hit by a car. Unfortunately, they sped with the help of a satellite-guidance system. The drivers declined Chloe's mother's advice to take a nearby highway and instead relied on GPS to send them plodding through small villages and even onto a road too narrow for the ambulance to negotiate, turning a 10-minute journey into 40. Chloe survived.

Freezies that kick

Keep an eye on the kids, frozen vodkasicles are coming this summer

BY DAFNA IZENBERG • Forget about a fly in your Chardonnay. This summer, you could have a Black Fly freezie. London, Ont.-based micro-distillery Black Fly Beverage Company, which last spring launched a "less sweet" cooler across the province, will soon be introducing Spiked Ice, a vodka-infused frozen treat for grown-ups. The company is owned and operated by husband-wife team Rob Kelly, 41, and Cathy Siskind-Kelly, 38, who originally planned to open a craft-brewery. When the couple discovered the faster-growing market was spirit coolers, they set to work concocting a recipe that called for all-Canadian ingredients (Ontario vodka, Quebec cranberry juice, and wild blueberry juice from the Maritimes), "softer bubbles," and less than half the sugar of most coolers. They also spent 18 months in discussions with the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario before applying for a manufacturing licence, the first ever approved by the AGCO for a micro-distillery. "That was a very uncertain period for us," reflects Siskind-Kelly.



They got the green light in December 2004, began production, and persuaded the LCBO, the world's largest single purchaser of beverage alcohol, to give the Black Fly cooler a test flight in six London-area stores. "We were able to miraculously hit the shelves for the May long weekend," Siskind-Kelly says. Today, the LCBO distributes the cooler to 380 of its 600 stores. "We were pleasantly surprised," says spokesman Chris Layton of Black Fly's success, crediting among other things the company's all-Canadian production and competitive pricing.

Spiked Ice is set to debut in 170 LCBO stores within weeks, and the Kellys are looking at markets in Alberta, Quebec and the East Coast. They also think consumers in the United States may be interested in Black Fly, as Kelly points out, black flies are indigenous to all of North America. "The name resounds on a regional level," says Kelly, "but it is universal." M



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MAEVE LEAKEY and student Frederick Manthi examine newly found fossil teeth in 2004

ANCIENT BONES OF CONTENTION

The work of hunting for fossils is fierce—and the competition even worse

BY BRIAN BETHUNE • If there's one thing the often bitterly quarrelsome scientists featured in Ann Gibbons's *The First Human* agree upon, it's that there is something special about holding a hominid bone. Hominids are every member of the human family who ever lived, a line that goes back some six million years to the point where we stopped sharing a common ancestry with chimpanzees. Touching a fossilized piece of those remote ancestors seems to give modern humans, members of the only hominid species still alive, an emotional connection to the dim past that borders on awe. "They call it hominid fever," Gibbons says in an interview. "Think how excited people can get looking into their own family trees—where we come from is one of *the* fundamental questions."

Looking for the answer to that existential dilemma—and the allure of the accompanying glory—are what keep the ferociously competitive paleontologists of her book going, year after year, battling snakes, scorpions, crocodiles, burning heat and the wild swings of African revolution and civil war. The search has proven astonishingly fruitful over the past decade or so—and every bit as contentious, as scholars battle over whether finds are human or ape. As *First Human* makes clear, appearances are not always misleading. What seems to an outsider to be a morass of ego, vaunting ambition and paranoia, is just that. "It's like the fossils come with a mummy's curse," remarks Gibbons, who, after a decade covering what she calls "the human evolution beat" for *Science* magazine, knows both the paleontology and the players.

They include Richard and Maeve Leakey of the famous fossil hunting clan and the touchy Michel Brunet, a Frenchman whose six-million-year-old *Sahelanthropus tchadensis* skull (found in Chad five years ago) is the current top contender for first hominid. And then there's Tim White, the caustic American (called He Who Shall Not Be Named by his many detractors, in honour of the evil wizard of the Harry Potter novels), who made an Ethiopian discovery a decade ago that may yet top Brunet's find when he finally publishes its details next year.

None of these people get along very well. One wrote a book about another entitled *Master of Deceit*, while the litany of charge and countercharge includes claim jumping, evidence faking and the peculiarly academic insult of "mediaphilia."

Gibbons makes no bones about focusing on the personal as much as the scientific. Success in this brutal business simply takes a certain kind of person. "The survivors in the field," Gibbons says, "are those who are truly obsessed. They can't let themselves care about what their peers think of their finds, because new hominid fossils almost always shatter preconceived notions of what they should look like, so naturally they're disputed. And if you don't fight to hold onto your fossil territory, somebody will take it over." It's a calling, she adds in deliberately Darwinian language, "that selects for alpha males, like White House politics. There are very few women."

What has made these alpha males (and a handful of tough females) so productive lately is a growing awareness of where to look. Until 1959, most scientists were convinced humanity arose in Asia. That year, the maverick Leakeys, Louis and Mary, unearthed a 1.7-million-year old fossil in Kenya, and the African gold rush was on. The Leakeys received star treatment in *Life* magazine—critics may decry celebrity science, but it's not new—in an article, Gibbons says, that was read by every one of the impressionable boys who grew up to be the fiftysomething protagonists of her book.

In 1974, Don Johanson found Lucy, a tiny female from Ethiopia. Lucy walked upright—the key marker for hominid identification—and for two decades was the prize exhibit in human ancestry. But there was a problem. Her bones went back 3.2 million years, but the emerging science of molecular biology—not warmly welcomed by the fossil men—insisted the split from chimps was much earlier, between five and seven million years ago. By 1995, bone hunters were moving out of East Africa to mine older geological strata in previously ignored locations—like Chad—and turning up ever more ancient finds.

Collectively, they have added more than 150 new hominid fossils, each more than four million years old, to a list that stood at a mere half-dozen in 1992. Perhaps the most exciting development, according to Gibbons, is that "finally, the fossil and genetic evidence are converging." That means the paleontologists are coming tantalizingly close to their Holy Grail, the moment when our distinctly human lineage literally took its first steps. M

THEY DON'T GET ALONG. ONE WROTE A BOOK ABOUT ANOTHER ENTITLED 'MASTER OF DECEIT.'

ON THE WEB *To read an excerpt of* The First Human *by Ann Gibbons, visit* www.macleans.ca/firsthuman

ANN GIBBONS

WAY OUT THERE

THE PEST ON THE PHONE IS A BILLBOARD

Advertising posters may soon be making marketing calls. Experiments in Europe are enabling otherwise static posters to use Bluetooth wireless technology to call subscribers' cellphones and blast further information on what's being peddled on the boards. In a recent test in London railway stations, posters of the band Coldplay detected 87,000 Bluetooth phones and offered to send further info. Seventeen per cent of phone owners accepted

I DECLARE A CHORE WAR

Forget the glass ceiling: the new battle of the sexes is over housework



IN SPAIN WOMEN CAN CITE DOMESTIC NEGLIGENCE IN DIVORCE SUITS

H. ARMSTRONG ROBERTS/CORBIS



RETROFILE/GETTY IMAGES

THEN AND NOW Women still do the lion's share, even if they work late at the office

WIVES HAVE MADE HUSBANDS LAZY BY COMPLAINING, SAYS COLEMAN

BY KAREN ZAGOR • Eleanor's husband, Paul, rarely watches *Trailer Park Boys*, so he takes full credit for coming up with the brilliant idea of taking their injured nine-year-old daughter to a vet. "Raven came back from the park weeping," says Eleanor, a Toronto landscape designer and mother of four. "She'd hit her arm on a metal bar." So Eleanor, who was expecting nine children for a birthday party, called her husband home from work and instructed him to take Raven to the hospital. "After the movie I called to check in. He said, 'Oh. It's fine. I took her to Anastasia [the neighbourhood vet—not her real name]. She examined her arm and said there was no break.'"

When Eleanor returned, Paul was sitting on the deck, contentedly drinking a beer. "It saved an awful lot of time and I'd been working all day," he says. "I was not looking forward to sitting in a hospital waiting room. And neither was Raven." While Paul's decision was perfectly rational—children and dogs are not so different when it comes to their tendons and bones—it also illustrates a sore point among men and women: when fathers are involved in child care, they do things differently.

That issue has come to the fore recently as men and women around the world do battle on the domestic chore front. You only need to browse the 172 responses to a posting about household chores last month on Leslie Morgan Steiner's *Washington Post*-sponsored blog, "On Balance," where parents sound off about home life, or trawl through the 128 letters in response to *Salon*'s recent review of *To Hell With All That: Loving and Loathing Our Inner Housewife*, by Caitlin Flanagan, to know that who does what at home is a hot topic. "The gender caste system is still alive and well in most of our households," wrote Judith Warner in the *New York Times* upon the death of feminist icon Betty Friedan earlier this year.

Warner, the author of *Perfect Madness: Motherhood in the Age of Anxiety*, notes that working women today do upwards of 70 per cent of household chores. Research from around the world consistently shows this to be true. Women spend more time on child care and housework than men, even when women are also spending as much time in the office as their partners. In Japan, a survey released this year revealed men do only one quarter as much housework as women. This, shockingly, is actually an improvement on previous surveys. The imbalance is often cited as a reason why Japanese women delay having children. Only in Norway and Sweden do you find virtual parity between men and women on the work and family fronts.

In Canada, which falls between those extremes, working mothers spend 9.9 hours a day in a combination of paid and unpaid work, compared with 9.1 hours for dads, according to an OECD report released last year. Men do spend more time in the office—30 minutes more, on average. But women more than make up for it with child care and other unpaid labour—78 minutes more per day. This may not sound like much until you calculate how many hours there are between walking in the door at 6:30 p.m. and collapsing into bed at 10 p.m., and how much dinner making, cleaning up and homework supervision has to be crammed in to that time.

In Britain, Melissa Benn, a journalist, coined the term "married lone parent," or MLP, to describe overworked, exhausted females who were trying to be all things to all people with little support from their spouses. It caused a flurry of debate on parental chat lines, and the MLP is now part of the British lexicon. Kathy Lette has gone even further in her new novel, *How to Kill Your Husband (and Other Handy Household Hints)*, which includes such chapter headings as: "The Working Mother's Week, or Where the Hell's Your Father?" The perception of women as desperate housewives spawned a glut of British reality television shows last year, including *Bring Your Husband to Heel*, starring a dog trainer and spouses in need of house training.

Since most women, though, are no more likely to take their husbands to the dog trainer, or kill them, than they are to take their children to the vet, Spain may offer a more acceptable solution. A new marriage contract, introduced last year, mandates that husbands and wives share domestic responsibilities including housework and looking after children or elderly parents. The contract will allow women to cite domestic negligence in divorce proceedings—a reasonable step in a nation where working women spend about three times as much time doing housework as men, and where fathers spend only 13 minutes a day, on average, looking after their children. The measures were introduced by Margarita Uria, a member of parliament. "Men have to learn to start taking more responsibility in the home and women have to help them do this," she told the BBC.

Spain isn't alone. Almost every government in the industrialized world has had a working paper on how to address the imbalance. Britain's Institute for Public Policy Research reported that, while the public expects a high degree of gender equality at work, most people expect women to look after the home and young children. In Australia, the federal sex discrimination commissioner, Pru Goward, launched a discussion paper last year on the family balancing act.

Why the imbalance? Is it because, as the title of Joshua Coleman's book, *The Lazy Husband: How to Get Men to Do More Parenting and Housework*, suggests, men are intrinsically lazy? Coleman writes that one reason for the chore wars is that too many women choose, at least metaphorically, to spend unnecessary hours sitting in hospital waiting rooms instead of taking their children to the vet. He says some women have made their husbands lazy through a process he calls "gatekeeping." "People often gatekeep by complaining about the other's standards, by redoing tasks, or by refusing the other's offer of help," he writes, echoing sentiments widely voiced by participants on Morgan Steiner's blog.

Those in academia who study the gender gap say there is some truth to this. "We don't just want our husbands to do the task, we want them to do it when we want them to do it, the way we would do it," says Linda Duxbury, of the Eric Sprott School of Business at Carleton University. "And men don't work well being micromanaged. We're not being micromanaged in the corresponding male chores." Duxbury, who authored a 2001 study on work-life conflict, describes an incident in which her husband was preparing dinner while she instructed him on how to chop onions. "He said, 'Linda, I'm either doing it or I'm not.' Women have to recognize that in some ways we are the authors of our own misfortune. We like to be martyrs. We like to complain."

Still, Duxbury says it's not as simple as saying we have made our men the way they are. Neither is it merely about women being proactive in getting men to do more at home, as Coleman suggests. Husbands, like children, he writes, need incentives, and nothing is more likely to motivate a man than the prospect of sexual favours. He does not elaborate on what would be a suitable reward for women, presumably, their pleasure in a gleaming home is satisfaction enough.

But what of, for instance, the responsibility of thinking about and planning family life? "It's very hard to measure," says Kerry Daly, a professor at the University of Guelph and co-chair of the Father Involvement Research Alliance. Daly is involved in a $1.6-million national study of fatherhood. "You don't see it in terms of who does the tasks. It's the planning, the orchestrating, the thinking, the calendar work. It is very clear in the studies I have done of dual-earner couples that the woman still takes responsibility for the planning."

Melody [not her real name], a Vancouver journalist and mother of two teenagers, agrees. Melody often works late, so her husband has taken over the cooking and laundry duties. "But I'm still the executive parent," she says. "I'm in charge of making sure we get to the dances, the eye appointments, the doctor, the dentist and organizing summer camp. He is really good, but he doesn't remember from day to day what needs to get done."

Alison, a Toronto lawyer and mother of two children under the age of four, uses similar boardroom language in describing the division of labour in her home. "He is good at doing tasks, and okay at doing some things unsolicited, but I chair most of it. I try not to downplay his contribution. He is very supportive. But we constantly fight about this and it's an issue because even for me to make To Do lists for him makes me resentful and takes an effort. Sometimes I can't stand the weight of it, that I'm the holder of the knowledge."

Daly believes this pattern is rooted in the traditional model of the division of labour. "What's been difficult for women to let go of is that sense of responsibility and sense of accountability. We've changed some of our external behaviour—the work activities that we do as men—but we haven't changed this outmoded model," he says.

One reason men and women approach housework, and child care, differently may have to do with our brains. "The neurobiology of men and women is different—different on a structural basis, different on a chemical basis and different on a physiological basis," says Sandra Witelson, a neuroscientist at McMaster University who is respected in research circles for her studies on sex differences in the brain. Right now, there is still a gap between what scientists can see in the

brain and what they know about how those differences play out, so any link is hypothetical. But "the crucial point here is that there are many neurobiological differences and they inevitably have consequences for thinking and behaviour," Witelson says.

It has been well-documented on IQ tests that women are better at picking out details in pictures than men. "I think it's not unreasonable to say that this may be a factor in why a man can open a fridge and not see the bottle of wine at the back. We do that better for some reason," says Witelson. Still, if women can function in a work world



MIND OF HIS OWN. Some scientists blame neurology for different styles with chores

largely constructed by men, men can do their share at home. "Because we are such highly cognitive creatures, we can do things that are contrary to our nature," says Witelson. "Human brains are very plastic and we're very adaptable."

But adaptibility, as she points out, only goes so far. My neighbour Jessica went out one sunny Saturday, leaving her husband in charge of her own children, then aged 8, 10 and 12, as well as my two daughters, who were 5 and 8. The children are generally well behaved and self-sufficient, which may explain why Chris, who works long hours during the week, felt relaxed enough to drift off to sleep. When Jessica returned at 8 p.m. and asked if their youngest had put on her pyjamas and brushed her teeth, Chris sheepishly confessed he had been asleep most of the time. While he was slumbering, the children had indulged in a session of butt-art, adorning their behinds with sunglasses and noses. Luckily, they had used washable markers.

That's another intrinsic difference between men and women—a mother might take a catnap while her own children played, but few mothers would be able to fall asleep if someone else's children were also in their house. From my own highly unscientific survey of friends and colleagues, it is clear men also do not see what women see. When they walk into the living room, they blot out the dust bunnies, when they buy apples, they don't notice when half are rotten.

If we accept that men really are different and will always do things differently, including parenting and housecleaning, it could go a long way toward a ceasefire in the domestic wars. Women can learn to duck out of the kitchen and let their men cook, and be less critical if the towels aren't folded perfectly. Men can volunteer to do more of the drudge work, and recognize that signing consent forms, coordinating after school activities and registering children for swimming lessons are essential and time consuming parts of parenting.

"Once fathers are in the home, they learn to take these things on and recognize how much work is involved," says Andrea Doucet, associate professor in sociology and anthropology at Carleton University, whose research focuses on fathers as primary caregivers. Her book, *Do Men Mother?*, is to be published in September. Doucet believes getting fathers to take parental leave is also important. And when it comes to the housework, pay someone else to do it if you can afford to, even if it's just for a few hours a week. Having someone clean your home may seem like a frivolous expense, but in the words of Linda Duxbury: "It's cheaper than getting a divorce." M

'HE IS REALLY GOOD, BUT I'M STILL THE EXECUTIVE PARENT'



SPAT FORCED HUSBAND TO BRANCH OUT

Gayadhar Panda had a spat with his wife and stomped out on her. That was 50 years ago, and since then the resident of Orissa state, in India, has been living in a mango tree in his garden. Now in his 80s, he passes his days among poisonous snakes, receiving food handed up from family members, and only comes down to drink water. Babula, his 55-year-old son, has repeatedly tried to coax him down, to no avail.

Everybody cares now

At 20, a big AIDS fundraiser remembers when support was scarce

BY DREW ROWSOME • "As soon as I said 'AIDS,' they'd say, 'We'll get back to you.' And of course they never did," recalls veteran Toronto fundraiser Ronnie Richman. In 1987, corporate sponsorship for Fashion Cares, Canada's largest AIDS benefit bash, was nearly impossible to find. Twenty years later, sponsors are arguing about the size of their billing. Well-known interior designer Brian Gluckstein (who was one of the chairs of the event for four years) laughs ruefully, "Years [earlier], they wouldn't have cared if their sign was backwards."

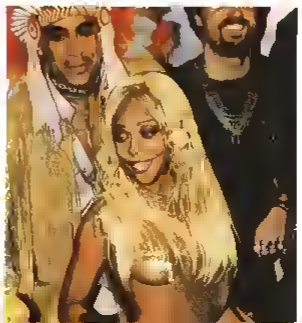
From a scrawny fundraising T-shirt launch at the tiny (765 capacity) Diamond Club in Toronto in 1987, Fashion Cares has grown into a mega-muscled-fashion-show-on-steroids spectacle that rivals Broadway's best. It raises money for the AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT), which has been on the front lines in the battle against HIV/AIDS since 1983. Denny Young, a former coordinator of volunteers for ACT, recalls that first year: "I think it was $10 general admission and $25 if you wanted a table. We made about $25,000. We thought we'd died and gone to heaven." This year, on June 3, Fashion Cares, with space for 6,000 attendees at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, is expected to pull in over $1 million, as it has for the past few years. The 20th anniversary edition will be celebrated with a lavish coffee-table book and a retrospective extravaganza, "Two Decades of Drama, Daring and Dreams."

Initially, local fashion designers supplied the majority of the clothes. It was a welcome chance to be *outre* and make a statement while flexing their creativity. Dan and Dean Caten of DSquared2, barely known in 1987 and the toast of Milan by 2006, created the very first ensemble, a "play safe" dress made of rubber, to grace the runway. International star designer Wayne Clark's ultra-glam evening gowns featuring yards and yards of braided horsehair appeared last year. Small Canadian designers from haute Hoax Couture to fetish fantasy fulfiller Marty Rotman of Northbound Leather have donated designs regularly from the beginning. As the event grew, they would share the stage with global design icons from Madonna fave Jean Paul Gaultier to Jackie Kennedy's adored Oscar de la Renta, who were eager to participate as Fashion Care's cachet skyrocketed.









FASHION CARES SCRAPBOOK (top to bottom) Linda Evangelista, Patti LaBelle, the 2005 show, Tricia Heifer, Lil' Kim

COURTESY OF M·A·C COSMETICS

H. ARMSTRONG ROBERTS/CORBIS

Supermodel Claudia Schiffer's appearance at 1993's Fashion Cares went a long way towards legitimizing the event. Suddenly, instead of having to be begged to appear, the stars were eager to be seen as caring, yet still glamorous, individuals. An impassioned 1995 performance by a then-unknown Ashley MacIsaac was only a prelude to the star wattage to follow. Patti LaBelle, Deborah Cox, Melissa Etheridge, Lionel Richie and k.d. lang (who both alarmed and titillated the scantily clad chorus girls who appeared with her) lent their talents and elevated the Fashion Cares profile.

With celebrity performers recreating stadium-sized shows came unexpected problems. The Village People needed the stage widened to encompass their flung-arm "Y—M—C—A" choreography. An emaciated Geri Halliwell required a full time driver to scour the city for her special dietary needs. Choreographer David Connolly remembers scrambling to procure enough harem outfits to adorn a surprise performance by down-to-earth diva Sarah Brightman. "That's the part that the audience doesn't ever get to know or enjoy. Knowing that those six costumes are from Ajax [Ont.] and those four are from Hamilton and it still looks spectacular!" Or the time he "borrowed" opulent ostrich feathers from a Las Vegas revue to create pièces de résistance headdresses. All he had to do was clear customs with crates of contraband animal products, stage the number and then get the pink plumes back before they were missed.

The stars and the buzz brought the corporate involvement, but with it came concern that the show would have to be toned down. Fashion Cares has been known for risque displays (with performers often clad only in body paint or strategic sequins) and a definite bent for homoeroticism. As Connolly admits, "We've never had a dancer boy in a shirt. It's unthinkable." How do bankers and business people react to models strutting a catwalk in the almost all together? Caterer Michael Dolan found they embraced the ribaldry. He vividly remembers the conservative fundraising clique Toronto's famous society "glitter girls" first attended in 1993. Their eyes widened as a male dancer clad only in a "little pouch" appeared. And then they applauded.

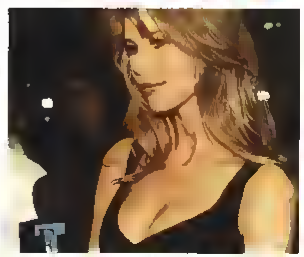
Fashion Cares is dependent on a small army of volunteers. Caterer Brian King recalls initially volunteering for Fashion Cares, which he's done since year one, as a way to be proactive amidst a crisis. "We weren't even sure where the money would be directed, one just had to do something." In the early years, the corps was composed of those most affected by AIDS. Brian Gluckstein remembers praying that some of the frailer volunteers would live to see the show. "We'd say, 'whatever you can do'—they were just so weak, they would just sit at a table and write names on badges or fill bags." Now that AIDS is often blithely seen as a "manageable disease," today's volunteers may be virtually unaware

THE WOMEN'S EYES WIDENED AS A MALE DANCER CLAD ONLY IN A 'LITTLE POUCH' APPEARED

of the event's humble beginnings to fight a mysterious horror. Even if initially lured by the prospect of free tickets to the gala, they soon become passionate advocates.

Besides being a big anniversary year, 2006 marks a significant turning point for Fashion Cares. Artistic director and show producer Phillip Ing of M·A·C Cosmetics is stepping down, leaving the fundraiser without the leader it has relied on for 19 of the past 20 years. But since AIDS has not been conquered (if anything, it has moved from the gay fringes into the mainstream), the show must go on. The question is, in what form? What began as a group of artists bravely attempting to tackle a barely understood enemy has become a must-see event for the hoi polloi. Michael Dolan believes that it doesn't matter, as long as the money is raised. "It's like Christmas," he says. "And you have to meet the new in-laws." M





SUPERMODEL Claudia Schiffer appeared in 1993; k.d. lang titillated the chorus girls

Love lost & found in L.A.

When your ex hooks up with Tori Spelling, it's a very public spectacle



Mary Jo Eustace (left) and her ex-husband, Dean McDermott, and his bride Tori Spelling

BY ANNE KINGSTON • On May 13, Mary Jo Eustace bought the new issue of *People*, the one with six pages devoted to the May 7 bare foot-on the beach-in-Fiji wedding of her ex husband, Dean McDermott, to Tori Spelling, the actress daughter of the mega-mogul tele vision producer Aaron Spelling, he of *Love Boat*, *Dynasty* and *Beverly Hills 90210*, which made his prin cess a household name

The Spelling McDermott nup tials are a case study in giddy ro mantic narcissism—just the two of them (plus a non-denominational officiant, a photographer and a team of stylists) boasting his-and hers French pedicures and white Dolce & Gabbana, celebrating their first dance in the sea, creating sand castles with banners reading "Truly" "Madly' and "Deeply" They trilled of the "angels" that brought their des tined souls together Spelling spoke of want ing nine children "to make a hockey team," suggesting that her Toronto born husband has more to teach her about the sport "I've never had as much of a de sire to get married and make a woman my wife as I've had with her," said McDermott.

"I had to see it," says Eu stace "I didn't know whether to laugh or vomit," a reference to the couple's disclosure that they mapped their future out on air sickness bags three weeks after meeting on a Lifetime movie shoot in Ottawa last Au gust These plans included dumping their spouses and cycling with Lance Armstrong

Eustace says she was blindsided when McDermott, an actor best known for play ing cops in detective dramas, announced their 12-year marriage was over They had a seven-year-old son and a newly adopted seven-week-old baby girl Months earlier, the couple had relocated to Los Angeles from Toronto to further McDermott's career At a party before the Lifetime shoot, Eustace, who has been an actor, model, chef, real estate agent, and co-host of *Canada AM* and the cooking show *What's for Dinner?*, suggested he befriend the well-connected Spelling

THEY MAPPED OUT THEIR FUTURE ON AIR SICKNESS BAGS THREE WEEKS AFTER MEETING IN OTTAWA

The exhibitionistic lovefest between the 32 year old Spelling and 39 year old Mc Dermott has thrust the 44 year-old Eustace, dubbed a "Canadian TV personality" by the U S press, as Jennifer Aniston in a D Holly wood movie larded with CanCon. She has witnessed every intimate--and humiliating-- detail of her husband's new relationship/brand ing exercise McDermott's three Tori inspired tattoos, his wedding band that reads "Tori, Tori, Tori, Tori", the "Mrs. Tori McDermott" etched on the beach after their wedding She'd turn on the television to see the couple making out on the red carpet at the VH1 Awards She heard of his Collingwood, Ont , candlelit proposal featuring a horse-drawn carriage She fielded media calls regarding Spelling's rumoured pregnancy Nor could she avoid posters of Spelling's VH1 reality show *So NoTORIous* "It was like a Second City skit," she says "But it was my life."

Now, in Hollywood fash ion, it is also her property Last winter, seeking an oasis from her legal battles for sole custody of her daugh ter and for permission to leave the U S , she co-wrote a pilot for a half hour com edy based on her fish-out-of water life in L.A On May 3, the *New York Post*'s Page Six, the Mount Sinai of gos sip, broke the news that Eustace's agent is shopping *My Husband Left Me for Tori Spelling*, a book pro posal, which has yet to find a publisher McDermott and Spelling dubbed the venture "oppor tunistic and undignified" through their spokesperson Eustace is unapologetic "It's my truth, my life I earned it I'll do what ever's good for my children and my life "

She wants the book to be poignant, funny, even redemptive "If they only want dirt, I won't do it " She sees the story as a metaphor for L.A. excess "People are completely infan tilized, they're facilitated to behave badly," she says "I m up against the ultimate *Dynasty* family, no pun intended "

Her ex's abdication of responsibility was the most painful part, she says "It's like, if anybody else gets run over and hurt, that's too bad " In a nice plot symmetry, Eustace has befriended Spelling's ex, Charlie Sheen an, who married Spelling at her parent's 56,000 sq foot home in 2004 in a $1-million blowout also covered by *People*.

Eustace says she's not a victim She quotes Jennifer Aniston's line to *Vanity Fair* "I don't want this to define me " Yet she knows her cur rent marketability is as wronged wife traded in for a younger, richer celebrity After her book proposal was announced, everyone from *Entertainment Tonight* to the *Globe and Mail* interviewed her, with CTV's *eTalk* running an "exclusive" four-part series Last week, Eustace turned down interview requests from *Us Weekly*, *Star* and *E!* She's eager to return next month to Toronto where she hopes to resume an on-air career "I need to get out of here before I become one of them," she says Yet she's cognizant her 15 minutes are ticking As she read *People*, she says, "All I could think was sitcom, sitcom, sitcom " M

SAKA JAYE / REX FEATURES CP (INSET)

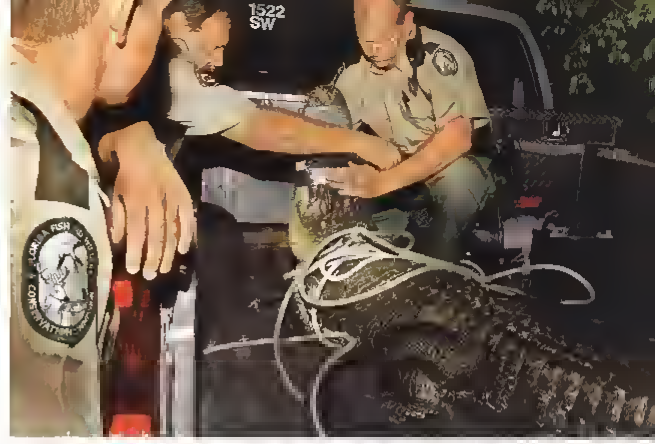


BRITAIN: PUTTING THE POP IN POP TARTS

Britain is, according to Nigel Dickie, a spokesman for global food giant Heinz, "the world's biggest bean-eating nation " The conse quences of such distinction aside, the U.K. spends half a billion dollars a year on baked beans To meet the growing passion, Heinz Is testing e frozen sandwich with beans seated inside, for heating in a toaster Explains Dickie "We went to find more convenient ways of delivering consumers' favourite beans "

DEADLY ENCOUNTERS

Nature bites back with attacks by gators, bears and mountain lions



DANGEROUS NEIGHBOURS: Fill in the wetland, and you're 'up to your ears in alligators'

BY COLIN CAMPBELL • Yovy Suarez Jimenez, a 28-year-old student at Florida Atlantic Uni versity, went jogging on May 9 near a canal in Fort Lauderdale, Fla Her two arms were later found in the belly of a large, one-eyed male alligator Officials say she was likely grabbed on land by the nine-foot-six-inch gator, which dragged her into the water, killing her Within five days, two other fatal alligator attacks followed in Florida, gener ating alarm. "I am stunned, the residents of Florida are stunned," says alligator trapper Todd Hardwick, hurrying between jobs "It's horrific " Trappers like Hardwick, who helped find Jimenez's body, have been busy in recent days as calls to the state's nuisance alli gator hotline have surged since the attacks.

Florida wildlife officials note the state is in the midst of a drought that's shrink ing alligator habitat and increasing competition for space and food--just as mat ing season hits, when male gators are already ornery But a more deeply rooted problem is that the alligator popula tion has swelled (1 4 million and growing) just as the human population has pushed into alligator habitat Gators turn up in schools, garages and pools, says Hardwick The alli gator has gone from being an endangered species in the late 1970s to one that is now considered a nuisance "You fill in the wet land and you build a shopping centre and you find yourself up to your ears in alliga tors," Hardwick says. "It's not too difficult to figure out why " But the three killings were unprecedented--previously Florida had had only 17 fatal gator attacks since 1948, al though attacks have become more frequent in the past 15 years

The story of the Florida gator is not unique Across North America, several predatory an imals, helped by conservation programs, are growing in numbers and increasingly com ing in contact with people Last July, a young girl was attacked by a mountain lion on Van couver Island She was saved by her mother, who fought the animal off with a beer-filled cooler The previous month, a woman was killed by a grizzly near Canmore, Alta , while out jogging on a trail that was closed in an effort to limit contact be tween people and bears

'HUMAN-ANIMAL CONFLICT IS ALL BASICALLY THE SAME STORY: IT'S HUMAN ENCROACHMENT'



JIMENEZ died on May 9

Animals that were per ceived to be the most dan gerous, and nearly wiped out by people decades ago, are now be ginning to re cover, says Bill Weber, a senior conservationist with the Wildlife Conservation Society in the U S "We are getting more of these back on the land, but there is a concurrent trend people looking to move into wild areas," he adds, citing the Crowsnest Pass area be tween Alberta and B C as an example The result? "There's going to be more contact, and more conflict."

Mountain lions, bears and wolves are all prime examples Two years ago, in the U S. Midwest, mountain lions began venturing into areas where they had not been seen in 100 years As with gators, the majority of fatal mountain lion attacks (about 10) have occurred in the past 15 years Last week, a mountain lion calmly walked into a house in Boulder, Colo , ate the family cat, then some cat food, and left Days earlier, outside Banff, a black bear attacked a 41-year-old man, leaving him seriously injured Banff has been a focal point for human bear inter action, given the hundreds of kilometres of recreational trails that now wind through bear habitat.

Last November, what might have been the first fatal attack in 100 years by a non-rabid wolf occurred in northern Saskatchewan University of Waterloo student Kenton Joel Carnegie, 22, was working at a mining camp when he went for a walk His body, mauled by wolves, was later found by co-workers Wildlife officials said the wolves were likely emboldened by humans feeding them scraps

In North America, there is an underlying cultural value that says, "We ought to have these animals around," says Weber That can lead to problems "Human-animal con flict, whether you're talking about tigers in India, or alligators in the south, or moun tain lions out west, is all basically the same story," says Kent Vliet, a University of Florida zoology professor who specializes in alliga tors "It's human encroachment, and this dilemma of how do we keep the wildlife and protect people There are no simple solutions." M

ST PETERSBURG TIMES/AP (TOP)



MAGGIE DOESN'T CARE FOR FITNESS

Life isn't easy for Alaska's only elephant, or for her zookeepers in Anchorage They're spending US$1 million to help the lonely 3,600-kg animal live a more interesting life One of the biggest expenditures has been a US$100,000 exercise treadmill, custom-made for her Despite its ingenious construction, and the dangling of apples, carrots, bananas and watermelon treats to get Maggie aboard, she continues to turn her trunk up at it



RAWI HAGE, Montreal taxi driver, photographer and, as of this month, first-time author. Hage left Lebanon in 1984 at the age of 20

HIS IMMIGRANT IS NO SAINT

Rawi Hage's new novel shatters the noble newcomer stereotype

BY NOAH RICHLER • There is a lot of wringing of hands, these days, by Canadians wondering what to make of the taxi driver in the front seat. The suspicion is that he is as talented as those he depends on for tips, and the majority of his riders wish there were ways to help—to get the man a proper job, and out of the way of rich kids playing lethal street racing games or thugs who have recently been killing taxi drivers at an alarming rate. Your driver is the engineer who left Iran for Toronto after the war with Iraq 18 years ago, the doctor who left Bosnia-Herzegovina for Calgary after Srebrenica, the enterprising trader from Bangladesh who is desperate for the chance of a better income. Or, if you are in Montreal and looking for a speedy ride up the Main, he just may be Rawi Hage, a Christian who left Lebanon in 1984, aged 20, a couple of years after the massacres at Sabra and Shatila. Hage is a photographer and, as of this month, first time author whose electric novel *De Niro's Game* signals a couple of exciting turns in Canadian fiction.

As a first generation immigrant novelist of Arab origin—Dimitri Nasrallah is another—the presence of Hage reflects the wider phenomenon of Montreal's utterly changed identity. No longer is Montreal the Jewish city. Muslims, predominantly Arab, now outnumber Jews by more than 11,000. At its worst, this demographic change has resulted in displays of anti-Semitic hatred that Israel's worst excesses do not excuse—nasty student demonstrations with Islamist banners that equated Ariel Sharon with Hitler and the Star of David with the Nazi swastika, Ahmed Ressam, the torching of the Talmud Torah school library, the discovery this month of locally hosted Farsi websites promoting suicide bombers, and the like. More generally, the influx of peoples from Arab states has been a boon. Montreal is perhaps the most keenly contested of all Canadian cities—anglophones, francophones and now allophones of all kinds staking their *loving* claim to this most convivial city, in novels, film, art and cuisine.

Although Rawi Hage's novel does not spend time in Canada—a second one, in gestation, does—*De Niro's Game* announces the cultural integration of yet another significant heritage to the country's complicated panoply of peoples. (To come clean, this writer is one of those Canadians who, possibly out of favour in the current political climate, adamantly believes that our demographic tapestry is entirely manageable, and has the potential to make this country one of the great, modern and sophisticated nations of the world.) And it does so in a manner that defies the usual, benign, wishful thinking in which fiction's immigrant characters are by definition saints.

De Niro's Game, which came to publisher Anansi as an unsolicited manuscript, was written in English. "I'm not sure that I could write a novel in Arabic anymore," says Hage, who also speaks French. It is a tight, sometimes violent and often upsetting novel with a markedly French existentialist flavour. It follows the twisted lives of Bassam and George, a couple of Beirut youths inevitably involved in contraband scams as they try to get by in a city upended by seven years of civil war. It is 1982, the year the Israelis laid siege to Lebanon's capital. The militias dominate the city—Muslims and PLO fighters in the west, and Christians and Phalangists to the east. "De Niro's Game" is the name Bassam and his friends have given to the suicidal routine of Russian roulette that many play—macabre homage to *The Deer Hunter*, the 1978 movie of the Vietnam War starring Robert De Niro.

"You feel invincible," said Hage, of life in Beirut, when I spoke to him at a Montreal cafe. "You feel you just won't die. Everybody else will, but not you. So you go buy food. You play soccer. You just live. There is always this denial. People trade. People travel. The war becomes normal, and you just live."

Bombs, said Hage, meant the day off school, though in *De Niro's Game* Bassam is in the habit of cocking an ear and listening for the *second* shell to fall. "The only time that you really feel tense is when the bombs start getting closer," said Hage. "It was always the second bomb, my father would say. The Syrians would target a certain area and throw one bomb. There would be quiet for a few minutes and a civilian would go and pick up the injured and then they would throw a second bomb in exactly the same place. The civilians start learning about military tactics, little by little, through experience."

Bassam and George embody the bifurcating destinies that lay before youths in what had famously been the "Paris of the Middle East." The pair smuggles guns, cigarettes, whatever comes their way, but Bassam does his utmost to avoid the path George takes—conscription into the Phalangist militia.

"Personally," said Hage, "my obsession was to leave the country. In a very loose way, there were opposed camps of thinking and always a tension between the two. The people who stayed became nationalistic and completely involved in the military and the war, and there were others who wanted to leave. They were considered cowards or people who were not at all nationalistic—leaving the country, this whole discourse starts."

Bassam is one of those who wants to leave. He dreams of the movies and Rome, though his flight does not occur immediately. One of the remarkable things that Hage's novel does is capture the sheer banality—so easily seconded by nationalist forces in the Middle East (or South America or just about anywhere, for that matter)—of unemployed men with nothing to do. Give them a Kalashnikov and a Jeep and a modicum of leadership and be done with it.

"Boredom is a big part of war," said Hage. "A lot of kids joined the militia out of a sense of powerlessness and financial gain, but there was also something sexy about being part of it. It was attractive to women. In the beginning, they were not so organized. They were just volunteers. But later on, when the Christians decided to collaborate with Israel, then things start to get more defined in a more militaristic, organizational way. You got a uniform, and a lot of kids started joining because eventually they were paid. You could be in the militia as a part-time job—but once you're in, you can't leave. You're stuck in it. The autobiographical part of the book is that I wanted to leave."

The promised land of Canada is a mirage in Hage's book, an illusory promise waved in front of Bassam, who escapes Lebanon for France in the immediate aftermath of the Phalangist massacres of Palestinians in Sabra and Shatila as Israeli soldiers looked on. Bassam arrives in Paris by way of a freighter to Marseilles, and wanders the city streets not knowing what to do with himself or the gun that war has rendered an essential part of his identity, as alienated as Albert Camus's stranger was. (Hage deftly has Bassam lent a copy of *L'Etranger* by an Algerian hotel receptionist.) Eventually, Bassam throws the gun into the Seine—though not before, as De Niro had done, contemplating its loaded barrel, and eventually going back to look for it again.

"Violence becomes a tool and a means to acquire things," said Hage, "and so it's hard for Bassam because it's a totally different environment and he cannot use it. Like any immigrant, there's a period of adjustment—and it's painful. Initially, it's very disturbing. You're disoriented, and the adjustment takes time."

Not wanting to give too much away, suffice it to say that the pledge of a Canadian passport is used to lure Bassam. Hage arrived in Canada in 1992, after first living and working in New York City for several years. But, story of the new millennium—Canada, not America, was his destination of first choice.

"New York was a horrible experience," said Hage. "I barely knew English. Looking back, I'm not even sure how I survived. What was so difficult was that Lebanon was cut off—there were no working telephones and so I wouldn't hear from my family for months. I could only get news about Lebanon from TV. I was in a nowhere zone. And then I heard that Quebec was accepting Lebanese because they were francophones, that they had some kind of a Lebanese program and wanted us for some reason. This was all community talk, but I applied and was accepted—and, you know, feeling equal to the person next to you, when you come, it's a feeling of *relief*. I remember when I got my papers, just walking the streets and feeling secure and safe. This is where I want to be. It's where I'm legally accepted and that's a great feeling."

Within the novel, mixed Arab and Jewish bloodlines make a mockery of the region's nationalist politics, but the most remarkable contribution Hage's novel makes is related to our own multicultural idea. Hage obstinately refuses to make Bassam a palatable icon of the immigrant experience, thus offering him some kind of moral rescue. Bassam is unsavoury and stays that way. This is the novel's other significant turn. Immigration is so much a keystone of Canadian multicultural belief that it approaches the status of the folkloric, if not ideological, and to say anything untoward about immigrants is to be seen to criticize the whole. Not *De Niro's Game*. Bassam was, possibly still is, a thug. So Hage's novel goes up against a long tradition of Canadian novels presenting a panoply of noble, enduring immigrants washed up on these shores and struggling through three generations of strife.

"In a lot of Western literature," said Hage, "and maybe in Canadian literature too, you cannot portray an immigrant as somebody that's evil, because the feeling is to do so might contribute to racism. But if you create characters who do only good, who are all oppressed, who were the victims of something and then come here and are saved, then you're not presenting them as humans, you're representing them as somebody to pity. I believe you should include the element of evil in every person, because it *exists* in every person. Once you omit that element of evil, you are no longer presenting a real human being. I didn't just see Bassam as an immigrant. I saw him as someone who has a dark past, who has been through a war and was involved in it." M

Noah Richler's **A Literary Atlas of Canada** *is being published in August by McClelland & Stewart.*

NO LONGER IS MONTREAL THE JEWISH CITY. MUSLIMS, MAINLY ARAB, NOW OUTNUMBER JEWS.



BEIRUT. Hage was 'obsessed' with leaving

PHOTOGRAPH BY ROGER LEMOYNE

BASSAM AL HAGE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

DAY IN THE SUN

DIRTY WORDS? CHRISTY'S LIPS ARE SEALED

Christy Wakefield refuses to swear, and in a profanity-ladan society it's made the Illinois student famous. Wakefield dropped four-letter words when she converted to Christianity, and pals referred her to Dr. Phil. He was interested, and she went on TV recently to talk about her clean routine. She's so clean she refuses to say many non-obscene words that just sound icky, including "sex," "cockpit" and a brand of snack called "Cheese Nips."

'IF THEY CAN PROVE I HAVE AN ACCOUNT ABROAD CONTAINING EVEN ONE DOLLAR, I WILL RESIGN MY POST'—CUBAN DICTATOR FIDEL CASTRO, AFTER FORBES CLAIMED HE'S WORTH NEARLY $1 BILLION

COLIN THATCHER
BOARD BENDS—AND HE CATCHES A BREAK

The National Parole Board had never been very friendly to **Colin Thatcher**, the former rancher and Saskatchewan cabinet minister convicted in the beating and stabbing death of his ex-wife **JoAnn Wilson** in 1983. In 2004, he was denied early parole, after serving about 20 years of a life sentence. Last year, his request for a three-day unescorted pass to visit his three children during Christmas was rejected. Even his own parole officer recommended Thatcher be denied. But lately, Thatcher has been given some leeway—since March he has been granted a number of passes to visit his sons in Winnipeg and Moose Jaw, Sask., unescorted, although the parole board has not confirmed if any visits ever took place. And last week, the 67-year-old, who still maintains his innocence, caught his biggest break yet, when he was granted day parole.

ROBERT PETIT
'THIS WILL BE A LAST RECKONING'

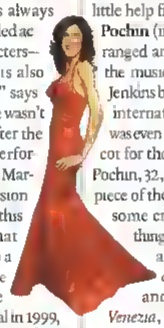
Former leaders of Cambodia's infamous Khmer Rouge will face a seasoned Canadian prosecutor when their long-awaited trials begin in the coming months. **Robert Petit**, a lawyer in Justice Canada's war crimes section, has been appointed co-prosecutor at the UN-approved tribunal investigating the slaughter of some 1.7 million Cambodians in the mid-1970s. "The acts committed in Cambodia during the period in question are well documented," says Petit. "This will be a last reckoning for the alleged perpetrators." The 45-year-old father of two has dedicated much of his career to bringing practitioners of genocide to justice, serving on the international criminal tribunal for Rwanda and the United Nations mission in Kosovo. He was also a prosecutor with the serious crimes unit in East Timor, and trial attorney for the Special Court in Sierra Leone.

BOB MARTIN
NEVER SICK OF LIFE IN THE CHAIR

Don McKellar never imagined that *The Drowsy Chaperone*, the silly musical he created in embryonic form several years ago for the stag of fellow Toronto thespian **Bob Martin**, would end up on Broadway—never mind earn 13 Tony Award nominations. But he never doubted how perfectly Martin would fit the role of the Man in the Chair—for which he earned a Best Actor nomination last week. "Bob was always working on what I called accountant-type characters—a loserish guy who is also witty and engaging," says McKellar. "So this role wasn't a stretch for him." After the pre-wedding bash performance, McKellar and Martin wrote a fuller version of the play on which this musical is based—that book earned the duo a Tony nod. And since playing the lead at the Toronto Fringe Festival in 1999, Martin has never relinquished the role—in Toronto, L.A. and now New York. "He's always had understudies," says McKellar. "But he's never been sick. He has a good constitution."

KATHERINE JENKINS
WHO SAYS OPERA ISN'T SEXY?

Katherine Jenkins is the reigning queen of pop-opera—the curious musical crossover genre that has given us the well-coiffed boys of **Il Divo**. Jenkins, 25, has a multi-million dollar recording contract, has performed at Live8, challenged the biggest pop acts in the world on the British charts and is Britain's fastest-selling classical musician of all time. In creating her debut album, *Premiere*, she had a little help from a friend, **Juliette Pochin** (inset), who wrote, arranged and produced some of the music. But after watching Jenkins break records and earn international fame—Jenkins was even named the official mascot for the Wales rugby team—Pochin, 32, decided she wanted a piece of the action. Heralded by some critics as the next big thing, Pochin landed herself a five-album, big-money deal with Sony BMG and last week released *Venezia*, her debut. The battle for pop-opera supremacy has officially begun.



LEFT TO RIGHT CP PHOTOGRAPH BY JONATHAN HAYWARD GETTY IMAGES CP

FIDEL CASTRO
HOPE HE HAS A GOOD MONEY MANAGER

"Why should I defend myself against this rubbish?" thundered Cuban leader **Fidel Castro**. He was talking about *Forbes*' annual list of wealthy rulers, which pegged the dictator's assets at $997.2 million, well behind top-ranked **King Abdullah** of Saudi Arabia ($23.3 billion) but ahead of **Queen Elizabeth II** ($554 million). The business magazine calculated that Castro, 80 in August, has economic power over "a web of state-controlled companies," and there are rumours of "large stashes in Swiss bank accounts." The Communist leader strongly disagreed, insisting his net worth is zero, and challenged his critics. "If they can prove I have an account abroad containing even one dollar, I will resign my post." Perhaps **George W. Bush**, the 10th U.S. president to face Castro, will take up the challenge.

JANAN HARB
THAT'S SOME PRETTY EXPENSIVE SUPPORT

Janan Harb is betting that the European Court of Human Rights and the miracle of compound interest will give her what the Saudi royal family doesn't want her to have—around $800 million worth of matrimonial support befitting a widow of the late **King Fahd**. Harb, a Palestinian Christian, says she married the billionaire prince in 1968, becoming one of his wives. The relationship, however, grew strained after Fahd became king in 1982 and thus custodian of the Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina. In 2004, with Fahd disabled by a series of strokes, Harb launched a legal maintenance claim, asking for what $12 million in 1968 would be worth now. The 59-year-old's legal fight in Britain was ended by an appeals court following Fahd's death last year at 82. So Harb's lawyers are filing suit in the European court. To help her case, she has started releasing pictures of her and Fahd together.



LEFT TO RIGHT AP NO CREDIT INF NO CREDIT

GAY TALESE
A LIFE THAT'S FAR FROM ORDINARY

From his brilliant **Frank Sinatra** profile in the April 1966 issue of *Esquire* (a 15,000-word piece written without having interviewed Ol' Blue Eyes) to his most recent book, *A Writer's Life*, in which he turns the spotlight on himself, **Gay Talese** says it all boils down to good storytelling. "I write about people with a story that would not be told if I didn't tell it," says the always impeccably dressed 74-year-old (the only thing Talese buys off the rack are knee-high socks). "These people have stories that say something about the time and place in which they exist. You can't Google most of the people I write about." It's the New Yorker's intense curiosity and eye for the finest of detail that sets him apart. "You don't have to lie if you do enough work," says Talese, in reference to the **James Frey** scandal. Talese's wife, **Nan** (below right), was the unsuspecting publisher of Frey's liar's memoir, *A Million Little Pieces*. "What is ordinary is extraordinary. But you have to put in the time."

ADRIAN VERES
NO PAPIER MÂCHÉ VOLCANO FOR THIS GUY

Adrian Veres never wasted his time with traditional science fair projects. A few years ago, when he was in Grade 8, Veres focused on nanotechnology (about the time his classmates were learning that water and vinegar don't mix). Now in Grade 11, the Montreal native has developed a biosensor capable of detecting infectious pathogens more quickly than current methods. "It generally takes about three days to identify the cause of a bacterial infection," says Veres, 16. "What I'm working on can do the analysis in a couple hours at the same cost." Veres's efforts paid off earlier this month when he won US$10,000 at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair in Indianapolis (an event that attracted about 1,500 high-schoolers from 47 nations). "Some teens have jobs—mine was going to the lab after school," says Veres, who is planning for a career in medical research. "If I kept track of my hours, I'd have been paid way under the legal limit."

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RIDING THE DA VINCI EXPRESS

Seeking the Truth aboard a 300-km/h publicity machine hurtling toward Cannes

BY BRIAN D. JOHNSON

film

It's the story of an elaborate cover-up, a mystery riddled with coded icons, and a conspiracy engineered by powerful forces that hold millions in their thrall. Are we referring to Opus Dei, the Vatican, and the secrets about Jesus encrypted in *The Da Vinci Code*? Well, no. We're talking about the plotting of a Hollywood studio, the branding of Renaissance art, and the gospel of spin. This is the story of a campaign to focus the world's attention on a blockbuster while trying to distract the media from the inconvenient truth that it's not a good movie.

Like *The Da Vinci Code* itself, the campaign unfolds as a frantic odyssey through England and France. But this grail quest travels by train, a rolling media junket headed to the red-carpeted altar of the Cannes Film Festival—the high mass of world cinema. A day before the May 17 Cannes premiere, some journalists are invited to join the movie's cast and crew on a Eurostar express racing from London to Cannes—setting a Guinness world record for the longest non-stop international train trip. I'm the only Canadian journalist on board. Stretched through a quarter mile of high-speed train, this Columbia Pictures junket serves as the delivery system for the most ambitous PR juggernaut I've ever seen—a cross-promotional blitz flogging icons of Christianity, classical art, French tourism and, oh yes, a movie.

The previous night, we were summoned to Sony's London headquarters to watch a 35-minute preview of footage from the film, just 24 hours before seeing the whole movie in Cannes. This is unusual, and fishy. Why couldn't Sony show us the whole movie in London, before we interview cast and crew on the train? The official line is that the studio wants to unveil the film in Cannes as a "surprise." More likely it's a strategy of damage control, to hold negative reviews until the last moment. The abridged version turns out to be a highlight reel of the best scenes. As grail knight Leigh Teabing, Ian McKellen towers above his co-stars, performing a water-to-wine miracle of making a banal script sound as rich as Shakespeare. And he dominates the preview footage so heavily that if you didn't know better, you'd swear that he, not Tom Hanks, is the star of the movie.

Sony's *Da Vinci* slogan, "Seek the Truth," begins to take on new meaning.

On the morning of May 16, before a vast phalanx of cameras on the platform of London's Waterloo station, the somewhat beefy Hanks, his co-stars, and director Ron Howard step onto a little stage for a ceremonial brass plaque christening of the *Da Vinci Code* train. It has been turned into a moving billboard, wrapped from stem to stern in vinyl images of the *Mona Lisa* and *Code* logos. Acting like a general sending a troop train off on a historic mission, Eurostar's French chairman raves about how "we like our travellers to seek the truth." Mugging for the cameras, Hanks looks embarrassed, as if he's been trapped into opening a shopping mall.

McKellen, however, tricked out in a panama hat and turquoise pants, seems to relish the occasion as just another flamboyant theatrical opportunity. As the train pulls out of London and picks up speed, his voice comes booming over the PA system. "Dear guests, we have observed history. We are *in* history now. Welcome to the maiden voyage of the *Da Vinci Code* train."

The junket is run with military precision. An anxious, jet-lagged army of studio publicists, most of them female, coordinate interviews on headsets. They're all uniformed in turquoise T-shirts adorned with Leonardo's *Vitruvian Man*—the spread-eagled naked guy. This must be the first time male genitals have been instrumental in the promotion of a studio picture. You won't find any full frontal



ERIC CHARBONNEAU/WIREIMAGE (OPPOSITE) GEORGE PIMENTEL

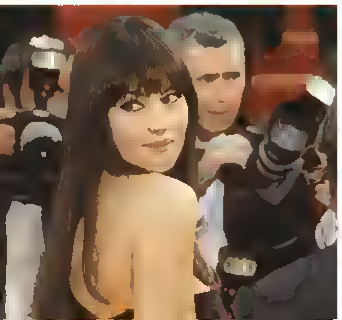
CANNES is a great photo op, but it also brings together the world's harshest critics

nudity in the movie itself, however. Although the murderous monk Silas (Paul Bettany) and the curator he kills in the Louvre both appear naked, their genitals are as mysteriously absent as those on a Ken doll.

I find myself sharing a railway car with TV folk, including *Entertainment Tonight* veteran Mary Hart and her squad of producers and editors. Hart, 55, is the Barbie-blond prototype for the tabloid TV host, and seeing this legend in the flesh is somehow more impressive than seeing Hanks. Encased in an unforgiving scarlet dress, with a wireless microphone unit taped to her back, Hart teeters on high heels as she performs stand-ups for the camera at 300 km/h. Like movie makers, the *ET* crew cheats the chronology. "Now we're zipping by the city of Paris," Hart tells her viewers, as the train flies through the French countryside, just minutes after emerging from the Chunnel. "Now we're approaching Avignon," she gushes in another segment, several hours before reaching Avignon. "It has been an amazing journey with Tom Hanks. . . . *Be there* as we arrive in style—it's your only ticket to this once-in-a-lifetime ride."

Movie junkets usually take place in luxury hotels, with the studio setting up TV cameras in a room, and the journalists filing in and out, receiving tapes of their interviews. This is the first junket ever held on a train.







WHAT REVIEWS? Hanks, with wife Rita Wilson, hams it up with co-star McKellen

The protocol is the same, but more compressed. Print journalists are scarce, and Hanks is doing only TV. McKellen is a game interview subject although he finds the whole process faintly absurd.

"We all wonder if there's any point to it," he says. "It's not a bad thing for an actor to have to explain himself. But to explain himself over and over again, just giving stock answers to stock questions—I did 75 interviews in two days for *The Lord of the Rings*. That was too many."

McKellen is an irrepressible contrarian. Asked about the religious controversy surrounding *The Da Vinci Code*, he says, "There's been much, much, much less of a hoo-ha than one might have expected. This train has *Da Vinci Code* plastered all over it, and there hasn't been one person standing by the tracks, holding a placard, throwing tomatoes. The world should *relax*." Alfred Molina, the British actor who plays Opus Dei's Bishop Aringarosa, concurs. Arguing that the *Da Vinci* storm has been largely fabricated by the media, he says, "Controversy would be someone throwing himself *in front* of this train."

But the filmmakers seem torn between snuffing out controversy and denying it exists—one minute they're exploiting the film's historic patina, then next they're saying, hey, it's only a movie. Howard keeps stressing that his movie is just an entertaining fiction. But his Oscar-winning producer Brian Grazer (*A Beautiful Mind*) appears anything but relaxed. "Ron and I have never been exposed to this level of controversy," says Grazer, after a publicist directs me to a train seat across the aisle from him. "I don't like the controversy. Because it's so out of your hands. We're not generating it. It's just happening. You just wake up every morning and put your safety belt on."

Scarecrow-thin, with wild eyes and an electro shock hairdo, Grazer is one of Hollywood's more eccentric-looking producers. Expressing curiosity about Canadian magazines, he uses a pen to scribble the name of a title I mention on the back of his hand. When I ask why the studio wouldn't show the media the movie in advance, he's skittish. "What did everyone else tell you?" Asked about selling the movie as a search for truth, Grazer takes the high road. "As human beings on the planet, people kill people based on what they think is the truth. And we as a group of filmmakers—even though it's fiction—are interested in flattening that. I want it to promote peace."

The movie's screenwriter, Akiva Goldsman, offers the most pragmatic viewpoint. "The movie is at least as inflammatory as the book," he says. "If you're not willing to present those narrative issues, don't adapt it." His job, he adds, "was to make a movie that *seems* like the novel—use smoke and mirrors to make people feel they've just seen the novel, but in 3-D." Trying to please readers with an immaculate reproduction posed a problem. "The novel pretends to be a thriller. Then, just when you're lulled into thinking it is, you get dropped into a 250-page dialogue scene. You want to put a gun in your mouth. To move through that, we employed every trick of the trade."

So what about the Truth? Is promotion another false gospel? Goldsman smiles. "Remember *The X Files*—'the truth is out there.' I don't think anybody really thought there was an alien conspiracy, which doesn't mean we

RED CARPET: All who glitter in Cannes show up for the big premieres and parties

CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT: GEORGE PIMENTEL. STEVE FINN. GEORGE PIMENTEL. GEORGE PIMENTEL. COURTESY OF SONY PICTURES. GEORGE PIMENTEL.

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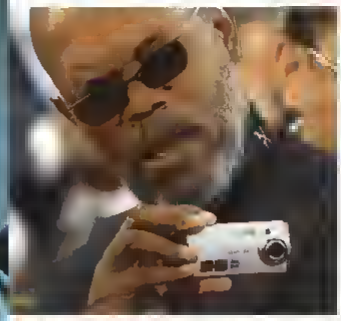
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don't use those phrases to get people to watch. We are a culture of conspiracy junkies."

The *Da Vinci* conspiracy all began with a mild-mannered scribe named Dan Brown. Shortly before we arrive in Cannes, the Eurostar chairman comes on the PA to tell us that Brown is on the train and drove it for a brief stretch. It's one thing to have your novel sell over 40 million copies, another to see it made into a blockbuster movie. But now it's a train, a 300-km/h publicity machine with the author at the wheel. The mind boggles.





IN THE PAST YEAR, over 1,000 copies of Brown's novel in 10 different languages have turned up in Eurostar's lost and found—proof that it's popular, but also disposable. And after sitting through the 2½-hour adaptation, which moved much slower than the train, *New York Times* critic A.O. Scott called it "one of the few screen versions of a book that may take longer to watch than to read."

Launching a movie in Cannes is a mixed blessing. Yes, it's the world's fattest photo opportunity, but it's also a mass rally of the world's most ruthless critics. And at the first press screening, the night before the red-carpet premiere, the knives were out. If you've just immigrated from Mars, and don't know the ending of the *Da Vinci Code*, consider this a spoiler alert. At the plot's payoff moment, when symbologist Robert Langdon (Hanks) tells cryptologist Sophie Neveu (Audrey Tautou) that she's a direct descendant of Jesus Christ, the audience explodes in laughter. Although Howard says the movie can mean different things to different people, this is not what he had in mind.

To be fair, the movie occasionally improves on the book, adding some shrewd twists, and putting some visual flesh on its iconography. But the film follows the novel so doggedly that any attempts to tart it up are glaring. A parade of cheesy "historical" flashbacks show Mary Magdalene giving birth one minute and the Inquisition drowning witches the next. And Bettany, who portrays Silas as a sexualized psycho brute with a bad accent, is ridiculous. But Opus Dei must have a great gym—as the monk flagellates his naked, buffed body, it looks like he spends more time working out than praying. Bring on Silas, the gay S&M action figure.

Tautou, meanwhile, looks lost as she delivers a pale facsimile of her *Amélie* ingenue act. Her role is to look astonished and reiterate plot points with lines like, "You are saying zee holy grail eez a woman?" She also throws a "sacred feminine" spin into the Hollywood chase cliché by racing a Smart car backwards through the streets of Paris. A weak joke. As for Hanks, he hangs back, soldiering on with wooden integrity. McKellen is left to happily steal the movie, unearthing hidden vaults of nuance in dull dialogue. But he elevates the material with such magisterial wit, the drama feels deflated when he's offscreen.

The *Da Vinci Code* press conference is more entertaining than the movie. Every year in Cannes, the international press manage to lower the bar of journalistic inquiry. A man from Iceland asks Hanks what he loved about Iceland. "Why do I love Iceland?" says Hanks, deadpan. "We only have a few minutes here, but I'm just going to start with how sensational the people are. The location is ideal. Summertimes are beautiful. There's a lot of great camping. And you can get a really great and relatively inexpensive cup of coffee. That's the recipe for a super duper country as far as I'm concerned."



McKELLEN: an irrapassible contrarian

McKellen steals the press conference as well as the movie. "When I read the book, I believed it entirely," he begins. "And when I put the book down I thought, 'What a load of potential codswallop.' And that's still going on in my mind." Then he says: "I'm very happy to believe that Jesus was married. I know the Catholic Church has problems with gay people, and I thought this would be absolute proof that Jesus was not gay."

IAN McKELLEN STOLE THE SHOW. 'I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE ABSOLUTE PROOF THAT JESUS WASN'T GAY.'

The *Da Vinci Code* pilgrimage ends that night on the red carpet, amid a blaze of glitter. After the premiere, the black-tie horde trudges to a soiree staged under a vast black pyramid in the old port, "beneath starry skies" worthy of the novel's final page. By now the Truth has been revealed: the Emperor is severely underdressed, and after all the anticipation, the response to the film is overwhelmingly negative. But as floodlit smoke pours like incense from the apex of the black pyramid into the Mediterranean night—not far from where Mary Magdalene was rumoured to have found exile—this movie still looms larger than what anyone might think of it. And there's no grail to be found in Cannes, just a Hollywood mirage on the Riviera. For *The Da Vinci Code*, a train with unstoppable momentum, the only true grail is the box office. M

ON THE WEB. *Get daily updates as Brian D. Johnson blogs from the Cannes film fest*
www.macleans.ca/insidecannes



WE'RE STALKING... NICOLE KIDMAN

The hyper-private star publicly upsized the adjectival sha usas for country singer Keith Urban last week, from boyfriend to fiancé, ending months of speculation about their affair. It was unclear whether the June wedding will happen in Urban's adopted Nashville or in their native Australia. Wherever, they'll be a good match in that both have overcome unsavoury habits. Urban was once addicted to cocaine and Kidman was married to Tom Cruise.



THE CHINESE HINTERLAND A billion-strong rural backwater is almost entirely cut off from the modern cities on the coast



CUNNING SIMULATION The swank boutiques and hotels in the major centres are just a glitzy way of covering up China's problems

The future is spelled C-H-I-N-A

We're awash with books on China—minutes after finishing one, you're hungry for another

BY MARK STEYN

Arthur Henry Ward was a penniless young Irishman living in lodgings in south London when he bought a planchette (or Ouija) board to cheer himself up. That night—1912 or thereabouts—he asked the planchette in what direction he would find success. It spelled out the word C-H-I-N-A-M-A-N.

Hmm. What could that possibly mean? "We asked it again," he recalled, "and still the answer was definitely and unmistakenly 'Chinaman.' I couldn't understand it at all for I knew nothing in those days about China or Chinamen. I must have remembered that when I sat down to write a book some time afterwards. All the usual types had been worked to death and so I lighted on the idea of a Chinaman…"

Young Ward called his Chinaman "Fu Manchu," adopted the *nom de plume* of "Sax Rohmer," and the rest is history, or at any rate the enduringly stereotypical inscrutable Oriental pulp version of history.

These days, half the planet seems to be doing what Sax Rohmer did—getting the old Ouija board out and discovering that, no matter what question you ask about the century ahead, the answer always comes back C-H-I-N-A. I seem to get a new China book in the mail every 48 hours or so. Ten minutes after finishing one China book, you're hungry for another: *China, Inc: How the Rise of the Next Superpower Challenges America and the World*. *China the Balance Sheet: What the World Needs To Know Now About the Emerging Superpower*. *China Shakes the World: A Titan's Rise and Troubled Future—and the Challenge for America*.

You get the picture. That's not to say the fellows with the Ouija board aren't posing different queries. Europeans (and many Canadians) want an answer to the question: what will save us from the hell of a second American century? Answer: C-H-I-N-A. No one can stop the rise of the Chinese behemoth, but fortunately Jacques Chirac has volunteered the wise old European Union to serve as Greece to Beijing's Rome, and together they will rule the world. It's not entirely clear what the EU brings to the table in this deal. Nonetheless, in Britain's *Guardian*, Martin Jacques was panting orgasmically for 2050, when China will bestride the planet and America will be a wheezing lardbutt unable to rouse itself from its rusted-up EZ Boy recliner. Jacques' reasoning rests on the fact that the Chinese are an "ancient civilization," whereas America is a mere "settler society," which sounds awfully like the line the Germans used to take when they compared their ancient *volk* with America's "half degenerated sub race" (as Kant put it). Or the argument of French philosophers such as Cornelius de Pauw that Americans were physically "stunted," and "in a fight, the weakest European could crush them with ease." Two centuries later, Europeans still believe America's stunted sub-race can be crushed with ease, but they'd rather leave the actual crushing to Johnny Chinaman while they hold his coat and coo appreciatively from the sidelines.

By contrast, the Americans want an answer to the question: who'll launch the next war? Answer: C-H-I-N-A. See *America's Coming War with China* by Ted Galen Carpenter, and *The Coming Conflict with China* by Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, and *Showdown: Why China Wants War with the United States* by Jed Babbin and Edward Timperlake. The last is the best, if only because it has an ingenious form: a series of brisk, vividly written scenarios for half a dozen possible wars with China over Taiwan, Korea, Japan, oil and "the so-called Assassin's Mace (*sha shou jian*) programs." No need to wait till 2050, they're all ready to roll in the next five years:

"The White House
20 January 2009
1635 Hours

"The *what* islands?" Standing in the Oval Office for the first time as president, the newly inaugurated commander-in-chief didn't bother to hide her exasperation…"

The islands Madam President has never heard of are the Senkaku Islands, which belong to Japan—currently Babbin was deputy undersecretary of defence in the first Bush administration, and Timperlake's an ex-fighter pilot, so they're not winging their war-game scenarios. What's fascinating is the subtitle: "Why China *wants* war." From Canada's natural resources to California's ports to Iran's oil, the politburo is hoovering up strategic assets around the world. If they were savvy enough to stick to Cold War Lite, they'd stand a chance of winning. But Babbin and Timperlake make the case that China's structural defects will propel it into a hot war sooner rather than later.

In 1932, back in the Fu Manchu days, when the inscrutable Oriental had a powerful grip on occidental culture, Perry Mason's creator Erle Stanley Gardner wrote a story called "The Danger Zone," and observed en passant:

"The Chinese of wealth always builds his house with a cunning simulation of external poverty. In the Orient one may look in vain for mansions, unless one has the entree to private homes. The street entrances always give the impression of congestion and poverty, and the lines of architecture are carefully carried out so that no glimpse of the mansion itself is visible over the forbidding false front of what appears to be a squalid hovel."

AS A GENERAL RULE, LARGE NUMBERS OF EXCITABLE LADS WHO CAN'T GET ANY ACTION IS NOT A RECIPE FOR SOCIETAL STABILITY

Not any more. Confucius say: if you got it, flaunt it. The glittering skylines of the coastal megalopolises ascend ever higher, on the ground, the lobbies of the chain hotels and the local franchises of the upscale boutiques are swankier than their American branches. But this is merely a latter-day form of "cunning simulation," a new "false front." Behind it lies the vast Chinese hinterland—a billion-strong rural backwater all but entirely cut off from the showcase cities on the coast, until some rustic catches SARS from the prize pig in the rec room and decides to toddle up to town for the day. In the west there are restive Muslim populations, and in the east the so-called *guang gun*—"bare branches"—since China introduced its "one child" policy in 1978, the imbalance between the sexes has increased to the point where there are 119 boys for every 100 girls, the most gender-distorted demographic cohort in history. The pioneer generation of that 20 per cent male surplus is reaching manhood now. Asked about this on the radio a year or two back, I suggested that maybe China's planning on becoming the first gay superpower since Sparta, and promptly received a ton of indignant emails. But that brings us back to Sax Rohmer's planchette board. Ask a question about China's future, and the answer comes up C-H-I-N-A-M-A-N, emphasis on the M-A-N, as in millions and millions of them, with no available women: as a general rule, large numbers of excitable lads who can't get any action is not a recipe for societal stability.

The answer to many of China's problems lies just across its northern border: the fast depopulating, resource-rich Russian east, which Beijing will wind up with one way or the other. If you read Mark Bassin's masterful book *Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East, 1840-1865*, it's hard not to notice that the rationale behind the Russians' sale of Alaska applies just as well to a big swath of their eastern provinces today. A century and a half ago, Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich, the brother of Alexander II, argued that the Russian Empire couldn't hold its North American territory and that one day either Britain or the United States would simply take it, so why not sell it to them first? The same argument applies now to the 2,000 miles of the Russo-Chinese border. Vladivostok will return to its old name of Haishenwei before too long.

And, given Russia's own gender imbalance—between sickly men of low life expectancy and long-lived robust women—it doesn't take much imagination to see a Sino-Russian union as a marriage of convenience more than just the geopolitical sense. That's the key difference between transatlantic Ouija boards on China: as the cannier American analysts see it, Beijing is a threat to Washington not because of its strength but because of its weakness. M



KEREN SU/CORBIS

FINALLY A BOOK ABOUT…THE NEW DUTY TO DIE

In *Forced Exit* (Encounter), American bioethicist Wesley Smith rejects the argument that assisted suicide can remain just a last resort for those at death's door or in unrelievable pain. Citing numerous cases to the contrary—in Belgium, Smith claims, the *very first* legal euthanasia ignored guidelines—he argues that an unholy alliance of "death fundamentalists" and forces seeking to control medical costs may prove fatal for the disabled, sick and poor.

LAUREN GREENFIELD/VII

MACLEAN'S

BESTSELLERS

COMPILED BY BRIAN BETHUNE

Fiction

		LAST WEEK (WEEKS ON LIST)
1	IN THE COMPANY OF THE COURTESAN by Sarah Dunant	9 (4)
2	THE BIRTH HOUSE by Ami McKay	3 (3)
3	THE DA VINCI CODE by Dan Brown	1 (138)
4	CELL by Stephen King	6 (6)
5	THE SEA by John Banville	8 (19)
6	THE REBELS OF IRELAND by Edward Rutherfurd	2 (4)
7	THE LIGHTHOUSE by P.D. James	5 (21)
8	A PERFECT NIGHT TO GO TO CHINA by David Gilmour	4 (18)
9	THE BROOKLYN FOLLIES by Paul Auster	7 (8)
10	THE SHAPE I GAVE YOU by Martha Baillie	(5)

Non-fiction

1	THE WEATHER MAKERS by Tim Flannery	2 (4)
2	SIX WORDS YOU NEVER KNEW HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH PIGS by Katherine Barber	3 (5)
3	MARLEY & ME by John Grogan	1 (8)
4	FREAKONOMICS by Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner	4 (39)
5	THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION by Karen Armstrong	(1)
6	THE YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING by Joan Didion	5 (23)
7	THE JUDGMENT OF PARIS by Ross King	10 (9)
8	POSTWAR by Tony Judt	8 (14)
9	THE BEDSIDE BOOK OF BIRDS by Graeme Gibson	7 (20)
10	SORRY, I DON'T SPEAK FRENCH by Graham Fraser	(1)

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DOES THE set overwhelm performers? Sometimes, but that's the point: 'Those who feel dwarfed should be voted off immediately.'

And the real winner is...the set!

The man who defined the American Idol look says his stage makes or breaks contestants

BY JAIME J. WEINMAN • As *American Idol* wraps up another season, commentators are still trying to explain the secret of the show's success. Is it the singing? The voting? Simon Cowell's sneer? But there's one aspect that gets little coverage, and it's the first thing you see when an episode starts: the scenery. Andy Walmsley, who designed the set of *American Idol*, had to do it in a hurry. "I did the main design concept in an eight-hour day or less," he says, adding that in TV "there isn't much time to be arty-farty." But what he came up with was a design that no TV viewer can seem to escape these days.

The set of *American Idol* is like a cross between an auditorium and a futuristic courtroom, while contestants perform on a lowered stage in front of the judges, monitors are everywhere, lights flash, and the show's name is always prominently displayed on the flashy stage floor. Walmsley is particularly pleased with the million-dollar screen at the centre of the stage. "What is clever is the way it splits at the centre and opens like a giant set of elevator doors." That's all part of the slightly sci-fi look of the show: the pillars with illuminated rings and the big circular objects on the ceiling look more like a bigger-budget episode of *Star Trek* than *American Idol*'s hybrid of game and variety show.

Like everything else about *American Idol*, the look is based on the original British version, *Pop Idol*. Both shows were designed by Walmsley, whose other credits include the U.S. and British versions of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* and the non-vocal version of *Idol—So You Think You Can Dance*. Though *Idol* is cheesier than the intimidating *Millionaire* set, it has the same kinds of bells and whistles, things sliding apart or lighting up.

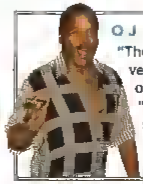
Walmsley himself places particular emphasis on the neon lighting, which is his trademark. "I was infamous for it in the U.K. The electricians would see my name on a schedule and dread the show because they knew it would have a bucketload of neon on it. My whole career in the U.K., people told me I think too big, so I thought, 'screw you, then,' and I moved to the States, the land of 'bigger is better,' and I love it here." He adds that there's a purpose to all the neon beyond just dazzling the audience into submission: in the flat medium of TV, "the neon helps outline shapes and tells the eye where a shape ends and where the shape behind it begins."

The constant use of neon hearkens back to the disco era, and the whole *Idol* set, in spite of the futuristic look, is a throwback to an earlier age of special effects. Instead of computer graphics, *Idol* impresses us with things that actually happen on the stage, especially the ease with which things move around. Of course, you can't make that look easy without a lot of stagehands and machinery. Regarding his favourite stage prop, Walmsley says that "the screen is extremely heavy and there are basically two railroad tracks under the stage supporting the wagons that are motorized." Railroads and wagons: about as far as you can get from modern digital effects.

This means the set of the most popular contemporary show is actually a bit old-fashioned. Walmsley admits that he's going for old-school opulence. "I believe that a TV entertainment show should represent a fantasy world, like the old Hollywood musicals. It's escapism and it should be a huge, glamorous, awe-inspiring world. To some old lady in the Midwest, it should be a world where only celebrities and superstars exist."

Does the huge set overwhelm the performers? Sometimes, but that's part of the point: the performers who last through the elimination rounds are the ones who can avoid looking amateurish in that setting. "If a performer ever feels dwarfed and out of place on that set, they should be voted off the show immediately," Walmsley says. "Look at the last three performers this year—they command the stage, they eat it up. It doesn't faze them. That's a true performer."

And so Walmsley's set, the world's biggest karaoke bar, helps to bring lots of flash and glamour to a show with mostly un-flashy, unglamorous contestants. If the point of *American Idol* is to show that even "average" people can become music stars, the point of Walmsley's big, neon-happy design is to remind us that this is a big-budget network show. Or as Walmsley says when asked to sum up his contribution: "The only reason that *American Idol* is a huge hit show is because of the brilliant set. There's some okay singers and some English guy who's rude to everyone, but really it's all about the set." M



O.J. AND OTHER SUV DRIVERS ..ACCORDING TO TV

"The company that makes the Hummer will no longer make their original vehicle, the H1. A spokesperson said, 'We sold a lot, but the country has only so many A-holes.' "—Conan O'Brien

"O.J. Simpson has a show like *Punk'd*, where O.J. plays pranks on unsuspecting people. And I'm thinking, 'When you think of hilarious pranks, you automatically think of O.J.' "—David Letterman

"He comes out of the bushes, saying, 'You've been juiced.' "—Paul Shaffer



TENOR BEN HEPPNER as Lohengrin in the Metropolitan Opera's production of Richard Wagner's *Lohengrin* last month in New York

A musical event, just not in T.O.

Ben Heppner triumphs in Wagner's *Ring* cycle on a new CD but isn't in the COC's production

BY STEPHEN CERA • The Canadian cultural scene is awash in "Rings" these days. First there was Toronto's *Lord of the Rings* play with music. Next up is the Canadian Opera Company's Canadian premiere of Richard Wagner's monumental four-part *Der Ring des Nibelungen* cycle that will inaugurate the COC's new Four Seasons Centre for the Performing Arts opera house in Toronto in September.

Now, courtesy of Deutsche Grammophon, Canadian tenor Ben Heppner, 50, can be heard on a new CD that marks his first recording of music from Wagner's *Ring*. The disc is an international musical event, because in an age that lacks true *Heldentenore* ("heroic tenors"), Heppner may be as close to the real article as we have. In some respects, he is an unusual Wagnerian leading man because his very ample voice is essentially lyrical, Italianate, almost soft grained, yet with exceptional ringing power. Here he tackles big stretches of the heavy heroic roles of Siegfried, two of the most taxing roles in all opera.

Heppner is of course already an acclaimed Wagner interpreter who has triumphed internationally as Tristan (in *Tristan und Isolde*), Lohengrin, and Walther von Stolzing (in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*). Last year, the *Guardian* remarked that "His Lohengrin and Tristan are simply the best in the world at the moment." The new disc shows that Heppner has a voice that is also right for Siegfried, with thrilling timbre and power and sufficient "beefiness." In the theatre, Siegfried calls for a sound of unlimited amplitude, lyricism and romance (qualities that might seem mutually exclusive). They are killer roles: the almost superhuman demands Wagner makes on the voice are extreme in terms of duration and force. Yet Siegfried also requires soft singing, as Heppner confirms in gentle excerpts from act two of *Siegfried*, the third instalment in the cycle.

It's hard to recall the last time a major label featured a tenor practically on his own in "bleeding chunks" (George Bernard Shaw's piquant phrase) of the *Ring*. No less a tenor than Placido Domingo, when he recorded *Ring* extracts for EMI in 2002, was joined by a soprano. Since Heppner has not yet assumed any *Ring* role on stage, the new CD—with the Dresden Staatskapelle, conducted by Peter Schneider—offers something of a preview of him in Wagner's magnum opus. Complete live performances will not occur until June 2008, when he takes on the part of the eponymous hero in *Siegfried* at the Aix-en-Provence Festival in France, supported by the mighty Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra and conductor Sir Simon Rattle. One year later, he will sing Siegfried in *Götterdämmerung*, the final part of the cycle, at Aix.

Which prompts the question: why will Heppner—arguably the world's reigning Wagnerian tenor, proud Canadian nationalist, adopted Torontonian (albeit born in British Columbia)—*not* be singing in the COC *Ring* cycle? His New York manager is diplomatic. "When Richard Bradshaw and the COC were planning a *Ring* cycle, they of course enquired about Ben participating in it," says William Guern of Columbia Artists Management Inc. "But at the time they asked, Ben did not plan to sing those roles in fall 2006. It was only after [the COC *Ring* cycle] was planned and cast that he took up those roles." (Heppner will sing one aria, which may or may not be Wagner, at the June 14 opening concert of the new opera house.)

The tenor's most recent main stage appearance with the COC was 10 years ago, in 1996, as Canio in *I Pagliacci*. Prior to that, his last appearance in a COC production was in 1988. The COC's artistic administrator, Philip Boswell, confirms Guern's account with respect to Heppner's participation in the COC *Ring*. Boswell says they discussed the role of Siegmund in *Die Walküre* "for a long time" and were planning to do a concert version of act one with Heppner in spring 2003. Based on that, they would decide whether to proceed with the stage production later on. But ultimately, he says, Heppner decided the part of Siegmund was too low for his voice. "Of course we were disappointed that he [Heppner] decided not to do Siegmund, but we have an excellent result with Clifton Forbis as Siegmund and Christian Franz as Siegfried," Boswell says. Asked if Heppner might figure in a revival of the COC *Ring* in some future season, Boswell says, "We have every intention of reviving the *Ring* but it will depend on funding. If it happens, it might then be interesting for Ben to do it if he's amenable." M



STEPHEN CHERNIN/AP

PAUL AND STORM . . . HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY

Little ditty 'bout Jack Bauer's plan / To try and stop the nerve gas attack by the mean Russian man / Jack is hiding in the duct work, crawling around / Then he pops up, pulls his gun shouting everybody down / Jackie sing, oh yeah life goes on, long after they set off the nerve gas bomb / oh yeah, I said life goes on, long after Michelle, Tony and Edgar are gone—to the tune of John Mellencamp's *Jack & Diane*, at paulandstorm.com/sounds/mellencamp_24.mp3



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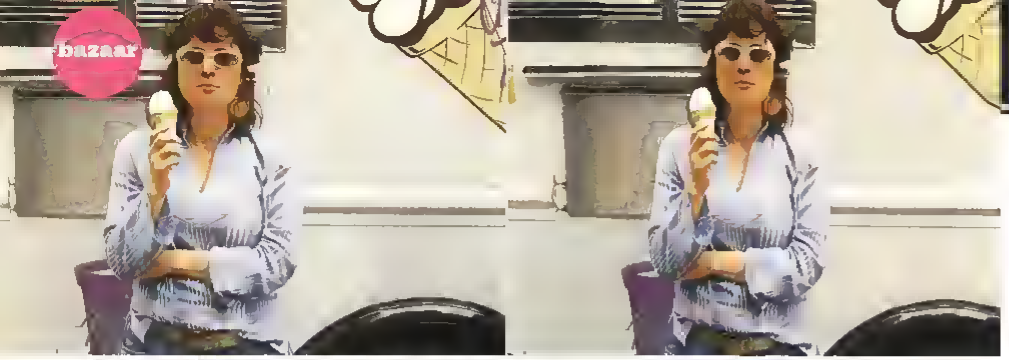
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CANADA POSTES POST CANADA

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BEFORE AND AFTER: Eat all the ice cream you want. Our photographer took the new camera to the streets of Toronto.

Say cheese, and look slimmer

Embarrassed by your vacation photos? A new camera will magically take 10 pounds off.

BY ANNE KINGSTON • North America's battle with obesity has just been handed a sleek, shiny new weapon with the arrival of Hewlett Packard's 8.2MP Photosmart R927. The digital camera boasts a "slimming" feature that offers three gradations of size reduction for photo subjects, the most extreme removing some 10 lb.—a neat reversal of the received wisdom about the amount of weight the camera adds.

For the first time the point and shoot crowd has access to the visual revisionism long employed by the pros. Consider it the layman's version of the anamorphic lens compression used in the much-mocked 1991 Paula Abdul video, *Promise of a New Day*, in which the singer is elongated to near freakish proportion. The technology mimics a funhouse mirror. "It takes the centre one third of the picture and squishes it together for an elongating effect without distorting the edges," explains Hewlett Packard's digital photography product manager, Linda Kennedy. Offered on several new HP models, the feature is most effective, she says, when photographing one subject rather than a group, or subject matter that extends to the edges. "Aunt Martha surrounded by a lot of space is ideal."

And it's the Aunt Marthas of the world to whom the camera, with a suggested retail price of $500, is targeted—that growing demographic of female digital camera users who don't want to use computer software to retouch photographs. "Slimming" is but one of 27 "artistic" in-camera effects, including "kaleidoscope," "retro," gauzy "wedding picture," sepia tones and pointillism.

The potential market appeal of a weight-reduction feature was culled during focus groups in which people admitted they didn't like to be photographed because they didn't like the way they looked. "We want to lower people's resistance," says Kennedy, who prefers the lowest "slimming" level. "It's more true to someone's character," she says.

Within the industry there's skepticism. "It's a gimmick," says Conrad Barrington of the Toronto camera store Henry's, which doesn't carry the line. Kennedy admits the feature has garnered attention. "It helps us to stand out," she says. Marketing buzz aside, "slimming" marks yet another milestone in the creation of easier—and increasingly idealized—digital camera picture-taking. Red eye has been eliminated, "scene mode" softens portraits by making skin dewier and eliminating pockmarks, "D-lighting" offers sharper resolution. "Every manufacturer is doing some form of interpretation," says Barrington. Customers demand it, he says, pointing to the popularity of Photoshop Elements, a $140 software version of the Photoshop retouching program used by professionals that's geared to the guy on the street.

View it as the democratization of a long-standing tradition. Abraham Lincoln credited the photographer Mathew Brady with helping him win the 1860 presidential election by altering a portrait to make his neck shorter and his face younger. Joseph Stalin taught the world that indeed photographs can lie, supervising skilled airbrushers as they eliminated purged party members. We've become inured to the cosmetic Platonism practised by fashion magazines, which has become so intrusive the actress Kate Winslet complained when British *GQ* winnowed her unduly in a cover photo. Increasingly, such Orwellian revisionism has crept into news coverage. *National Geographic* elicited furor in the mid 1980s when it moved a pyramid to accommodate cover design. *Time* darkened O.J. Simpson's skin. The official wedding portrait of Prince Edward and Sophie Rhys-Jones was doctored to replace a scowling Prince William with a smiling Prince William.

Kennedy says visual alteration isn't a long term direction in the company's product development. So no "Botox" feature or the ability to replace one's husband digitally with George Clooney quite yet. She dismisses the suggestion that "slimming" will contribute to visual fraud by permitting people to, say, post inauthentic images on online dating sites. "I can't imagine it'll be the first time," she says with a laugh. "We're not enabling anything other than what's already out there."

The feature could even motivate actual weight loss, Kennedy says, noting that physical therapists have expressed interest in using it to show clients how they'd look 10 lb. lighter. But why sweat? If "slimming" technology takes off, it could end up in eyeglasses, contact lenses, and even television screens, so there'll be no need. M



WHAT THEY GOT FOR IT... A KATE MOSS KISS

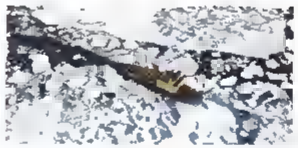
British retailer Philip Green paid $120,000 last week in a charity auction for a kiss from supermodel Kate Moss. Then, in defiance to his wife, Green gave the kiss away, to Jemima Khan, who is dating actor Hugh Grant. The lip-lock that ensued went on for more than a minute, shocking some patrons with its enthusiasm. It was more entertaining than Grant's offer at the same event to play a round of golf. He attracted only $24,000.

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'I GOT TIRED of the grinning chimps on local media boasting about million-dollar condos,' says a fan of the Vancouver real-estate blog



IN A NEW BOOK, *Snakes in Suits: When Psychopaths Go To Work*, the authors say most of us will encounter one psychopath a day

Bubble, bubble, toil and trouble

The red-hot housing market's spawned a new breed of bloggers who gleefully await a crash

BY KEVIN CHONG • Every day Matthew Klippenstein, a 30-year old fuel-cell engineer, goes online to wait for the sky to fall on the housing market. "House prices make me angry," he says. Although he and his wife earn well above the average household income in Vancouver, they've decided to continue renting. "We'd rather be able to enjoy our lives and be able to afford to have kids." Klippenstein watches local housing prices on the site RealtyLink (*www.realtylink.org*). He feels prices are inflated, and bases this view on information he's gleaned from blogs forecasting a drop, and on the logic of Canadian financial gurus like Eric Sprott, who writes a monthly investment column on his site, *www.sprott.com*. Klippenstein thinks the market will correct itself in the next 18 months. "When the bubble bursts," he says, "there will be a lot of people who got swept up in a speculative fever, who'll lose a lot of money."

With the spike in prices, real estate has become a topic—like religion or politics—that's no longer safe for polite conversation. Talking about houses or condos can instantly divide a room between the homeowners who bought at the right time and whose swollen property values make them wealthy on paper and smug in person, and the unhappy renters who've been shut out of the market.

And so, these days, frustrated real-estate obsessives have retreated to the anonymity of the Internet. They go to blogs with names like Bubble Meter and The Boy in The Big Housing Bubble that discuss and post links to news articles, economic data, and other blogs in the "bubblesphere" that support their view. Many cover specific markets: the Calgary Contrarian (*calgary-housing bubble blogspot.com*), for instance, or Toronto Real Estate (*realestatejunkies.blogspot.com*), which monitors that city's "dangerous supply-side overhang" of condos.

As with politics, the real-estate blogosphere is a place for people who feel deceived by the "mainstream media." "I got tired of the grinning chimps on local media boasting about million-dollar condos," says Alan Ashton, a 40-year-old single parent who regularly visits his local "bubble blog," the Vancouver Housing Market Blog (*van-housing blogspot.com*). Ashton, who rents, recalls sharing his views once on a pro-investment real estate website. "I got positively roasted by bullish real-estate types. Any suggestion I made that affordability was becoming a problem was met with outright hostility."

"There's a fair amount of emotion when you're talking to people who would like to buy a home but aren't willing to commit financial suicide to do it," says Timothy Ellis, author of the blog Seattle Bubble (*seattle bubble.blogspot.com*). "And that emotion was a large factor in creating the bubble itself."

Real estate voyeurism isn't quite as developed in Canada as it is in the U.S., where sites like *www.Zillow.com* and *www.realestate abc.com* reveal recent sale prices on almost any U.S. address you enter. Basing their calculations on public records, they offer an estimate of the home's current value, its square footage and year of construction, and even include a satellite photo of the area. The sites have rapidly become a form of real-estate porn, hooking renters and homeowners alike.

In Canada, bubble-watchers—youngish and predominantly male—instead rally around the blogs. According to Zai Yu, a 31-year-old software developer, the readers "are professional, literate in financial esoterica, rational and probably a bit geeky." It's safe to say most rent. And they don't mind that many of the bloggers keep their identities private. In fact, the anonymity confirms the sense that one is ostracized for being anything but wildly optimistic about the market.

Blog authors all air the same economic arguments: the fundamentals are off (in many hot markets, a condo can't be rented for its monthly mortgage payment), speculators are artificially driving up prices, and supply will soon overwhelm demand. Meanwhile, they kill time by pointing out—with equal parts amazement and disgust—the astronomical prices. Last year, the Vancouver blog ran a photo of a decrepit house in the Downtown Eastside (list price: $270,000) with this caption: "Notice the bars on the windows. 976 square feet. Just try to remind your kids not to touch the needles on the front yard."

Their view may be catching on. "I have a co-worker who sold his condo last year," says Klippenstein. "He put all the money in silver bars. I think silver has almost doubled since then." M



THE WEB **TEAM SHOPPING**

"*Tuangou*" is sweeping China's shopping industry, creating bargains for consumers who are willing to band together, and headaches for harried vendors. Translated as "team shopping," the phenomenon involves shoppers cruising the Internet for sales, then bending with other shoppers looking for the same thing and bombarding stores with demands for group discounts. There are 110 million Web surfers in China, and dozens of *Tuangou* sites.

CP

How to spot the office psychos

For them, work is a game of manipulation in order to gain influence, sex, power or money

BY LIANNE GEORGE • Dave is a charming new hire at a fast-growing high-tech firm. He is handsome and confident, with an impressive list of credentials, and he mixes easily with colleagues and superiors alike. But as Dave becomes more secure in his position, his peers begin to notice disturbing changes in his behaviour. He has a startlingly short fuse, for instance. Moreover, he lies, steals company property, takes credit for his colleagues' work, and blames others for his mistakes. By the time his boss, Frank, figures out that Dave is not the man he hired, Dave has already cozied up to the company CEO and sabotaged Frank's reputation. Dave is more than just your typical office jerk. This guy is a psychopath.

In fact, Dave is a composite character depicted in *Snakes In Suits: When Psychopaths Go To Work*, a new book by University of British Columbia psychologist Robert D. Hare, one of the world's foremost experts in the study of psychopathy, and American organizational psychologist Paul Babiak. According to the authors, psychopaths comprise roughly one per cent of the general population—which translates to 300,000 or so in Canada—and they've all got to make a living somewhere. "The number of people with psychopathic personalities suggests that most of us will come across at least one psychopath during a typical day," write Hare and Babiak.

In the mid '80s, Hare devised a 20-point checklist of personal traits and behaviours, called the Hare Psychopathy Checklist-Revised, now widely recognized as the standard diagnostic tool used to assess psychopaths. More often than not, he determined, psychopaths have an innate sense of personal entitlement. They are irresponsible, impulsive and grandiose. Most significantly, they have no conscience, and therefore no capacity for empathy, guilt or loyalty.

For garden-variety psychopaths, the authors warn, work is not about personal fulfillment or achieving long-term goals. Rather, it's a game of manipulation. It's about sizing up your colleagues and preying on their weaknesses in order to gain influence, sex, money or any number of self-serving rewards. And any collateral carnage only adds to the fun.

Unfortunately, protecting yourself from an office psychopath is not easy. First, the authors say, you need to be able to distinguish the Daves in your office from the aggressive Type A personalities, the brown-nosers, and the other everyday schmucks. Sometimes the difference is unnervingly subtle. Psychopaths are chameleons—able to shape-shift depending on their environment, making them, "near-perfect invisible human predators." They are "masters of impression management," and gifted interviewees. They can build elaborate fictitious personas, and spin narratives that make them seem initially affable and quite sane.

At work, as in every part of their lives, psychopaths engage in a three-step process of goal attainment. First, there is the assessment phase, wherein a Dave is on the lookout for someone who could be potentially useful to him. It could be someone in power, the authors write, or it could be a person with more "informal power"—for instance, a gifted colleague whose work he might appropriate or an administrative assistant who has a direct line to the boss's ear.

Once the psychopath has homed in on his target—and identified his or her emotional weaknesses—the manipulation phase begins. "A psychopath can appear strong, naive, dominant, honest, submissive, trustworthy, worldly, or whatever he or she believes will get others to respond positively to manipulative overtures," say Hare and Babiak.

Finally comes the abandonment phase. "Once psychopaths have drained all the value from a victim," they write, "they abandon that victim and move onto someone else. Sometimes by this point, they have destroyed careers. Other times, the victim won't realize until much later that he or she has been cheated, defrauded or otherwise abused."

The only way to arm yourself against psychopaths at work, they say, is to understand how they operate, and to seek help immediately if you suspect you're being used as a pawn. At the same time—and this is the inherent trouble with *Snakes in Suits*—the authors make it clear that reading this book does not give lay people the expertise to diagnose psychopaths in their midst. Still, readers may find that the next time their cubicle-mate borrows a stapler for weeks on end, without even asking, the act might well take on a surprisingly sinister sheen. M

SERGE ATTAL/TIME LIFE PICTURES



MOST IMPROVED **SHERYL CROW**

It's been a rotten year for the 44-year-old singer. In February, shortly after breaking up with fiancé Lance Armstrong, she underwent radiation treatment for breast cancer. But last week she was back performing, albeit a little shakily. She sang briefly at a sales presentation for a new U.S. broadcasting network. When she performed *Soak Up the Sun*, she flubbed the lyrics. "I knew it last night," she joked gamely. "I think the radiation went to my brain."

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COMMENT

A big week for love monkeys



Greetings fellow humanoids! Welcome to another illuminating instalment of This Week in Evolution, the only media column that's been billions of—or, if you're Jerry Falwell, exactly 6,000—years in the making.

It's been a big week for monkeys. Let's get right to it.

Item: There's startling new word from researchers that monkeys may be able to speak in "sentences."

A team of British scientists found that certain Nigerian monkeys are able to communicate by combining sounds into a sequence, an ability thought to be exclusive to humans and whatever Nick Nolte is. This discovery expands understanding of the evolution of language in human beings and technically makes all organ grinders bilingual.

These putty-nosed monkeys—which typically travel in groups consisting of an adult male and several adult females (much like certain Mormons and Hefners)—apparently communicate using two main warning calls. One sounds like "pyow", the other is a cough-like noise best expressed as "hack."

According to researchers, when the adult male delivers a "sentence" consisting of three pyows and four hacks, it is understood by the female monkeys to mean "let's get going" or "time to move on." Whereas four pyows and three hacks clearly means, "I'm going bowling with Steve." (I'm paraphrasing.) Hurling one's feces at another monkey, meanwhile, is still generally understood by scholars to translate as, "I'm working on my lines for the Rob Schneider audition."

Item: Rev. Pat Robertson says God has personally told him it's going to be a rough year for many along the coasts of the United States.

Robertson said he was contacted by God during a prayer retreat in January. "There may well be something as bad as a tsunami in the Pacific Northwest. ... If I heard the Lord right about 2006, the coasts of America will be lashed by storms," Robertson told viewers of *The 700 Club*, raising the heretofore unexplored notion of a supreme being who deigns to speak directly to a human but apparently mumbles.

After the weather warning, God's voice reportedly went on to say, "Nah, Reverend, I'm just messing with you. It's Ricky, the janitor. You done praying so I can lock up?"

(Note: Clearly, this item doesn't deal with evolution in the traditional sense—but it does touch on the evolving nature of God, who has apparently taken up meteorology to pass the time between fixing the outcome of sporting events, appearing on various pastries for sale on eBay and ignoring my nightly prayer in which all I ever ask for, sweet merciful God, is a chance to shake the hand of Mr. Lee Majors.)

Item: A new study suggests that our early human ancestors may have interbred with the forerunners of chimpanzees long after the two species branched out from their shared family tree.

The findings, which are based on the results of a genome analysis, have shocked the scientific community—not to mention many chimpanzee parents, who suspected their daughters were up to something but, wow, not anything this freaky. Indeed, many researchers believe that once the data is fully analyzed, there are bound to be major implications for scientific theory, human evolution and Michael Jackson's love life.

In the study, published in the journal *Nature*, scientists found that human/chimp DNA didn't finally diverge until 5.4 million years ago*—hundreds of thousands of very awkward years after the two lines split. (Typical morning-after conversation: "Gee. Last night at the cave—I coulda sworn you were a biped.")

For many scientists, these unexpected findings about "a hybridization event" between man and chimpanzee demonstrate just how complex human evolution has been—and just how historically accurate the filmmakers got it when they had Charlton Heston allow his manly gaze to linger just a little bit too long on that female chimpanzee psychologist.

What is beyond doubt is that the study's publication inadvertently violates the original hominid credo, believed to have been devised shortly after the first instance of interbreeding: what happens in the Pliocene epoch, stays in the Pliocene epoch.

So the secret is out. The taboo has been broken. But for now, a word of caution: scientists emphasize that the notion of rampant interbreeding remains hypothesis, not proven scientific fact. Researchers will continue to look for more evidence through the discovery of further genetic similarities or perhaps a 5.4 million year-old bowl filled with car keys.

*(*Does not apply to Matt LeBlanc/chimp DNA, which is estimated to have diverged last Thursday.)* M

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A librarian comic strip, vegan doughnuts, luxury submarines and All The King's Men in our compendium of things that make life worth living



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No longer in grade school or playing the ukulele? You'll still see the beauty of the Lunch boxAlele. It comes in Betty Boop, Superman, Dennis the Menace, Buckwheat and more—or send in your own lunch box for a custom-made instrument. *hometown.aol.com/boxaleleco*

SHOCK & OW

In Shocking Roulette, up to four players put their fingers in the game's grooves—and one person is randomly shocked. It's Russian roulette meets sticking a knife in an outlet. *gadgets.co.uk*

UNDER THE SEA BUT OVER THE TOP

Yachts are so last summer. The ultra-wealthy have a new way to impress: luxury submarines. The Phoenix 1000, capable of trans-oceanic crossings, has 5,000 square feet of living space and a docking mini-sub. The asking price? An ice cold US$78 million. *ussubs.com*



SPY VS. SPY IN PARIS

Alan Furst has made a fine career out of writing about the little-known fringes—at least for English-speakers—of the Second World War. The likes of Hungarian diplomats, Polish resistance fighters and Turkish spies mark his espionage novels. Furst's latest, the exquisite *The Foreign Correspondent*, opens in Paris in 1938, with the murder of an Italian anti-fascist journalist by Mussolini's secret police.

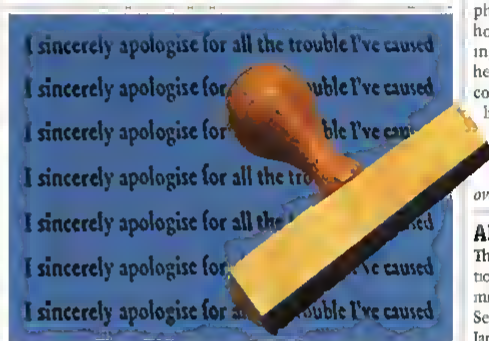


FUN, FUN DEBUT

Montreal quintet the Lovely Feathers crash the indie rock scene with *Hind, Hind Legs* (produced by Metric's James Shaw)—a madcap ride of absurdist whimsy, at the jolting pace of 12 lattes too many.

MEXICO IN VANCOUVER

Mexico: The Revolution and Beyond, 1900-1940 at Vancouver's Presentation House Gallery (until May 28) features photos by Agustin Victor Casasola (1874-1938). See images of Pancho Villa, Emiliano Zapata and lesser-known Fortino Samano, awaiting his death by firing squad.



SORRY STAMP

Ever waste valuable time apologizing to your friends, neighbours and the guy behind you in line? Streamline that process with a stamp that says "I sincerely apologize for all the trouble I've caused." It's just one in a set of Honesty Stamps designed to do the grovelling for you. *mosleymeetswilcox.com/shop/shopstamps.htm*

HALIFAX HOMECOMING

A.Y. Jackson's *Entrance to Halifax Harbour*, a 1919 classic depicting ships bringing soldiers home after the Great War, is on long-term loan to the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia after 80 years at the Tate in London. *Entrance* summons the bleakness of war, and brings to mind the 1917 explosion that levelled part of Halifax.

A DOZEN DOUGHNUTS, HOLD THE DAIRY

Mighty O Donuts look more decadent than anything at Krispy Kreme or Tims—but they're dairy- and trans-fat free, with all organic ingredients. You'll have to go to Seattle to try them, but for vegans that's a small price to pay for heaven. *mightyo.com*



ADIDAS GOES ART HOUSE

For its new Adicolor shoes, Adidas commissioned seven online short films, each representing a colour. The final instalment, "black," is done in stop-motion animation and is one of the most nightmarish, unsettling pieces of marketing ever produced—involving a drunk panda bear and a fish with a death wish. Not for the faint of heart. *r000g000b000.net*



WHAT HAPPENS IN THE LIBRARY STAYS IN THE LIBRARY

Librarians aren't all technophobic spinsters with pencils holding up their buns. Capturing the I-want-to-smash-my-head-into-this-desk feeling that comes with dealing with the public, *Unshelved*, an online comic strip with a daily readership of 30,000, proves there's a lot of humour in the stacks. *overduemedia.com*

ALL THE KING'S PENN

The trailer for the latest adaptation of *All the King's Men* is brimming with Oscar-calibre talent. Sean Penn, Jude Law, James Gandolfini, Kate Winslet, Mark Ruffalo and Patricia Clarkson.



SEX & THE CITY OF MONTREAL

Seems strange that a quirky Canadian TV series about a Montreal sexual anthropologist with love life issues would last three seasons. But Showcase's *Naked Josh* gets better every year.

ALTON NELIUS RONNING

1925-2006

A globetrotter as a boy, the 'Arctic Angel' rescued polar explorers and dodged bullets over Nigeria

Alton Nelius Ronning was born on May 13, 1925, in Fancheng, on the Han River in China. His father, Chester Alvin, had also been born there, to Norwegian Lutheran missionaries, and after spending time during his youth in Canada, Norway and the U.S., returned to Fancheng with his wife, Inga, to work as a teacher. The couple had five other children, Sylvia, Meme, Audrey, Kjeryn and Harmon. When Alton was two, the Ronning family moved to Camrose, Alta., where other Norwegians had settled, and where Chester had spent part of his own childhood.

In the years that followed, Alton and his father shared similar paths. Chester became principal of Camrose Lutheran College, where Alton was a mischievous student who sometimes skipped school with friends to smoke cigarettes and cut the heads off of chickens out of curiosity. When the Second World War began, Chester, who in 1918 had served in the British Royal Air Corps, became the head of the discrimination unit of the Royal Canadian Air Force. He later became Canadian ambassador to China, Norway and Iceland, and high commissioner to India. He was also acting head of delegations to the Geneva conferences on Korea and Laos, and a special envoy to Hanoi and Saigon, helping negotiate an end to the Vietnam War.



During the war, Alton also joined the Canadian air force, and served overseas. For a few years after the war, he worked as a mine and land surveyor in Ontario and Camrose. But when the Korean War began, Alton re-enlisted as an air force pilot. He kept that job until he retired in 1970, at 45, the maximum age for military flying. A tall, dark man with wavy hair, blue eyes and the "Ronning dimple" in his chin, Alton had his own international adventures—for which he was ornately decorated. In 1956, he flew relief supplies to Greece after a devastating earthquake. Shortly before the Six Day War in 1967, Alton flew UN troops out of Gaza. In 1968, during the Nigerian civil war, he delivered food to Biafra by the light of the moon. He and his crew flew with oxygen masks in a non-pressurized plane to mitigate the impact of stray bullets shot from below. A year later, Alton found a British expedition lost near the North Pole and dropped supplies. He was hailed as the "Arctic Angel."

"There were two loves in his life," says Alton's daughter, Cheryl. "One was flying, and the other was my mother." Avril Buckingham, a pretty, petite brunette born in Calgary to a military father, married Alton in Camrose on April 15, 1946, five years after they met at the Lutheran college. Her first day there, he spotted her coming up the walkway and said to his friend, "Leave 'er alone, Paul. She's mine." Their children, Terry, Cheryl and Cal, were each born in different places, as Alton took military posts in such spots as Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Montreal, Middleton, N.S., and Edmonton.

Travels didn't keep Alton from enjoying his family. Cal recalls playing catch with his father, who encouraged him as a pitcher, and cheered from the dugout during games. "It was a sheer electrical feeling to have my dad there," he says. Alton took both of his sons flying. But at home he didn't talk about work. "He never said anything about the troubles he had," says Avril. "I learned about them all later on, listening when he phoned his old friends."

By the time Alton retired from the air force, he had logged more than 12,500 flight hours (earning him a rare spot in the military's "10,000 hour club"). He and Avril moved to a cherry orchard in Penticton, B.C., where Chester had once considered going. Alton golfed, curled, played cards and went fishing on Pennask Lake, then an isolated area fertile with loons, bald eagles and schools of rainbow trout. Terry recalls Alton saying when they were out on the water, "I wonder what the poor people are doing."

"It was a good time we had in the orchard," says Avril, "But then we got older and older and we couldn't even climb the ladder up to the tree." In 1998, they moved into a condo back in Camrose, which Alton called "my hometown," and where his sister Sylvia still lived. It was around then that Alton was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. Last year, after falling and breaking his hip, he wound up in wheelchair. Even though his memory began slipping, Alton always recognized his family, and kept the jokes coming. During his last days, when the only word he spoke was "Avril," Alton had "the most expressive eyes and forehead," says Cheryl fondly.

On April 22, 2006, Alton Ronning, 80, died of pneumonia, surrounded by family. In the weeks before, when Avril was at their condo, which overlooks Alton's childhood home, the college and the church where they were married, she discovered old clippings and certificates from his air force days, stuffed under their bed. "I never knew he saved any papers," says Avril. Among them were his flight logs. The last entry was written just as he retired and received his airline transport rating from the Department of Transportation, certifying him to fly commercially (though offers came, he never did). It reads: "CHEER'S LAST ENTRY!!!, D O T ATR RIDE (PASSED!) THAT'S IT signed A.N. Ronning." BY CATHY GULLI



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